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the BOOKPRESS

Volume 2, Number 1

February, 1992

Ithaca, New York

COMPLIMENTARY

A Conversation with James McConkey

Writing in the First Person

Jeanne Mackin

Books by James McConkey:

COURT OF MEMORY
Dutton, 352 pp., \$9.95 paper

ROWAN'S PROGRESS
Pantheon, 288 pp., \$22.00

A roller-coaster drive down a straight, dipping country road leads eventually to the farmhouse James McConkey shares with his wife, Gladys, and assorted cats and dogs.

INSIDE:

An Interview With
Abraham Pais
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Dead Elvis
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Life in a
Nursing Home
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Electromagnetic Fields
and Human Health
p.13

A fine, grey mist hangs in the air making the day the kind that most people grumble about but I secretly cherish, uniting, as it does, Ithaca with London, Dublin and those other parts of the world and the soul where gloom is right at home and even cheery.

McConkey's farmhouse, in fine traditional manner, lords it over a crossroad that sections the countryside into four rolling fields. As soon as I pull into the circular drive the author appears at the door, ready to greet me; he's pale and slight and with hands an aristocrat would envy.

"It's a Chekhov kind of day," McConkey agrees, checking the sky. "Kind of pleasant, I think." He opens the door cautiously, not because he fears strangers, but he fears their automobiles and his two dogs are nudging him, eager to run free. "Too much traffic," he says regretfully. "I have a fenced-in place for them out back." The dogs are startling: pure black and both half labrador, large and almost mythic-looking, like twin canine gods. They are tail-thumping friendly, but inside I notice they move strangely. Both have lost a front leg. "Car accidents," McConkey says.

"I am no more than the old caretaker standing solidly, if help-

lessly on the ground," he said to me the evening before... not in person, but in an early short story of his, "An Essay on a Premonition and Eight Heads," which I had been rereading in preparation for the interview. The story is about a college professor who, having a sudden and dire premonition of disaster, rushes home to find, thankfully, all is well with wife and children. Inside this story of imagined disaster is a cameo story of real disaster, of a young man, caught in a grotesque accident, tumbling out of an airplane to the ground below, where he lands near the caretaker, the witness of his death, who is unable to do anything but watch.

It is too neat, too glib, to say that James McConkey is the caretaker, helpless in the face of disaster. But here are these two dogs, victims of almost grotesque coincidence with their two missing front legs, nuzzling and pushing around him as they greet me.

The world, in McConkey's stories, is a place both dangerous and vulnerable. There is loneliness and injustice and rejection. Potential accidents lurk in every situation; the loss of love can be heard in words not said. It is also a world in which
see *Visit*, p. 10



James McConkey

Illustration: W. Benson

The Good Soldier Zizek

Chris Nealon

Books by Slavoj Zizek:

**FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT
THEY DO**
Verso, 288 pp., \$17.95 paper

**LOOKING AWRY:
An Introduction to Jacques Lacan
Through Popular Culture**
MIT Press, 380 pp., \$22.50

**THE SUBLIME OBJECT OF
IDEOLOGY**
Verso, 336 pp., \$18.95 paper

What is ideology? How is it different from "reality?" These questions form the center of a debate that has vexed Marxists for at least a century. The popular conception of ideology, that it is a thought-system that produces "false consciousness," and leads away from objective truth, still lingers in some Marxist scholarship. One powerful criticism of that definition is that there is no non-

ideological truth, that all knowledge is shaped through power-relations, no matter how "scientific" or objective that knowledge may be. Although this criticism has led to exciting re-examinations of culture - in the form of battles over what, "objectively," should compose college curricula, or of critiques of the scientific establishment - it still leaves us with the question, how does ideology work? If no claim to truth is pure, if we are always bound up in ideological systems, then how does that binding-up take place?

It is this question that motivates the work of Slavoj Zizek. Zizek, a Slovenian theorist of ideology, has gained attention in the United States with two books, *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan but Were Afraid to Ask*, and *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. He is teaching this year at SUNY Buffalo, and visited Cornell in November
see *Slavoj*, p. 4

Review

Cartoons That Bear Witness

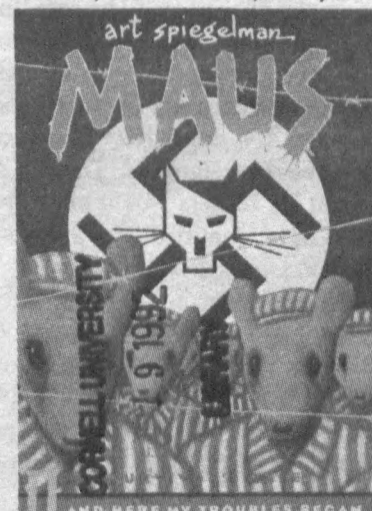
Mark Shechner

**MAUS II: A SURVIVOR'S TALE
And Here My Troubles Began**
by Art Spiegelman
Pantheon, 136 pp., \$18.00 paper

One thing we needn't contend with in reading this sequel to Art Spiegelman's original *Maus*: *A Survivor's Tale* is the shock of novelty. Whatever scandal may have attached to a Holocaust story told in comic-book form was defused shortly after the publication of the first volume in 1986. Spiegelman's devotion to craft and his serious engagement with history were instantly apparent to readers, who were struck by how much realism could be wrung from so stylized a medium. As one commentator observed, "Spiegelman redefines the comic book."

But then, Spiegelman and friends had been redefining the comic book for years. A veteran of the '60s and '70s underground *comix*

movement, Spiegelman honed his skills in fleeting and sometimes one-shot publications named *Bijou Funnies*, *Choice Meats*, *Conspiracy*



Capers #1, *The Mini-Mag of Disgust* and *Young Lust*, publications that broadcast their outlawry via an art that was, in style as well as sentiment, normally feverish, cluttered, irritable, and neurotic, in which the

Marx Brothers teamed up with the Marquis de Sade to go motoring through the unconscious. Spiegelman and his cohorts, R. Crumb, S. Clay Wilson, Harvey Kurtzman and others home-brewed a native American avant-garde, whose common aesthetic, if it had one, lay somewhere between "art gangsterism" and "abstract depressionism" - Spiegelman's own choice phrases. At the start of the 1980s, as that movement succumbed to an economic crunch - small readership, high production costs - Spiegelman and his wife, Françoise Mouly, established *Raw* magazine as a haven for the *comix* diaspora and an American hostel for European artists who had been improvising their own forms of art gangsterism on the continent.

These exhibitions of literary and graphic violence were not so far removed from actual violence:
see *Maus*, p. 9

Opinion/Editorial

Reflections on Martin Bernal's *Black Athena*

John E. Coleman

BLACK ATHENA

The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization

by Martin Bernal
Rutgers University Press

Volume I: The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985

\$15.95 paper, 575 pp.

Volume II: The Archaeological and Documentary Evidence

\$16.95 paper, 736 pp.

In November, we published an interview with Martin Bernal about the controversy over his projected four-volume series "Black Athena," the second volume of which was published last summer. In December, we published a letter which supported Bernal's thesis regarding significant Egyptian and Semitic influences on ancient Greek civilization. Here, we continue coverage of the controversy with the first half of an essay by John E. Coleman of the Department of Classics at Cornell University. Coleman offers criticism of Bernal's work, to which Bernal has given a response (printed below). The second part of this debate will be printed in the March issue of *the Bookpress*.

In general, the Egyptians say that their ancestors sent forth numerous colonies to many parts of the inhabited world, by reason of the pre-eminence of their former kings and their excessive population; but since they offer no precise proof whatsoever for these statements, and since no historian worthy of credence testifies in their support, we have not thought that their accounts merited recording.

— Diodorus Siculus, I, 29 (1st century B.C.; Loeb translation)

Two of the four projected volumes of Martin Bernal's revisionist study of Greek prehistory have now appeared and it is not too early for a general assessment, particularly as the work is receiving extraordinarily wide attention from many different audiences [*Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick), Vol. I, *The Fabrication of Ancient Greece, 1785-1985* (1987); Vol. II, *The Archaeological and Documentary Evidence* (1991)]. Bernal's message that Egypt and the Canaanite Levant had a fundamental impact on the Aegean world in the Bronze Age (3500-1100 B.C.), particularly from 2100-1100 B.C. on, and consequently that "Afro-Asiatic roots" were basic in the formation of Classical Greek culture, is an attractive one for people who feel unjustly left out of standard treatments of Western civilization.

His explanation for the lack of scholarly champions for this view, namely a racist preference for a vision of an ancient Greece unblemished by cultural debts to Asiatic and Semitic speaking foreigners, is plausible at first sight. But is his picture of Bronze Age history likely to be accurate, and is his assertion that racist preconceptions have played a major role in suppressing it true?

Bernal's general view rests on specific claims that Greece was invaded or colonized by the Hyksos from Egypt in the 18th and 17th centuries B.C. (the early Mycenaean period), that it underwent massive cultural changes (such as the adoption of Egyptian gods) as a result of these invasions, that the classical Greeks of the 1st millennium B.C. (the Iron Age) knew about these invasions and resultant changes, and that classical scholars have continued to reject both the evidence for such an invasion and the ancient Greek belief that it took place primarily because they are racist.

1. The Hyksos invasion of Greece.

The Hyksos were a Semitic-speaking, Canaanite people from southern Syro-Palestine who infiltrated and later came to rule Egypt around 1660-1550 B.C. They were expelled from Egypt by Ahmose, the first pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty (1550-1525), and he and his imme-

diate successors subsequently campaigned in southern Syro-Palestine and established their hegemony over it.

There is no historical evidence in favor of the purported Hyksos invasions of Greece. Such invasions are mentioned neither by Manetho, an important historical source for the Hyksos, nor by any Bronze Age source. Egyptian and Canaanite 2nd millennium documents rarely mention the Aegean (although they frequently mention other foreign places) and when they do, they convey the impression that the peoples of Egypt and Canaan (i.e., Syro-Palestine) were familiar with Aegean peoples mainly as traders and, occasionally, as raiders.

The archaeological evidence suggests that trading and contact were considerably greater than the written sources attest, but does not, in my view, support Bernal's claims of invasions of people numerous and powerful enough to introduce foreign divinities and customs or massive linguistic influences. From the 17th century B.C. on, if not earlier, the Aegean was part of an extensive Eastern Mediterranean network of trade, and perhaps even diplomacy. However, although possible influences from Egypt and Syro-Palestine may be discerned, particularly on Minoan Crete, there is no unequivocal instance of cultural borrowing significant enough to be characterized as basic to Aegean

civilization. Minoan palace-centered society, for instance, has many unique features and, although some artistic techniques and subjects are borrowed from the East, notably in the case of fresco painting, many are distinctively Aegean (e.g., the frequent representations of bare-breasted females with flounced skirts and of bull-leaping). Some of the alleged borrowings may in fact have originated in the Aegean and have been exported to Egypt and Syro-Palestine. There is no more reason for thinking that the "flying gallop" pose, for instance, originated in Egypt than in the Aegean; in fact, given its chronological precedence in the Aegean, it is more plausible to believe that its source was the Aegean. Mycenaean Greek palaces, with their focus on the ceremonial *megaron* (hall), have no prototypes in Egypt and Syro-Palestine.

Actual Egyptian or Canaanite objects, although they become more frequent later, are rarely found in Greece at the time of the supposed invasions. For instance, not a single object from the shaft graves at Mycenae, which Bernal claims are those of Hyksos princes, bears the distinctive marks of Egyptian origin, except possibly for a single scarab and two ostrich eggs (which may have come from Libya via Crete).

A strong argument against such invasions, in my view, is that the local Aegean syllabic scripts (e.g.,

see Coleman, p.4

A Response to John Coleman

Martin Bernal

I should like to respond to John Coleman's criticisms in the order in which he sets them out - the fact that the quotation from Diodorus Siculus with which Coleman heads his piece does not apply to Egyptian claims of conquests in the Aegean will be discussed in a later section. In the introduction, Coleman overemphasizes the importance I place on the Hyksos "invasions" of the Aegean. It is true that these were essential to the Ancient Model, though Herodotus and the other of its proponents maintained that Greeks had continued to learn from Egypt and the East long after the original settlements. However, the Hyksos settlements are of less significance to my Revised Ancient Model. I only devote one chapter out of twelve in Volume II of *Black Athena* to them. While I believe that they actually took place and had a long-lasting impact on Greek civilization, I also maintain that there was massive Egyptian and Levantine cultural influence on the Aegean both before and after this period. Therefore, I do not accept the statement that my "general view rests" on these "specific claims." My general view rests on the great number of cultural similarities between the Greek and the West Semitic and Egyptian civilizations, which I believe to be far too numerous and intricate to be explained in terms of independent invention.

1. Hyksos invasion of Greece.

Our disagreements on the nature

of the Hyksos in Egypt are only important to this argument on the issue of chronology. Coleman states that the conventional period for the Hyksos is c.1660-1550 and the *Cambridge Ancient History* puts it at 1684-1567. However, there are very strong archaeological and historical grounds for believing that Hyksos were in control of much of Lower Egypt from the Late 18th century.

I am not sure why it should matter that the Egyptian historian Manetho did not dwell on the traditions of Danaos and Kadmos found in Greece. While Egyptian historians were delighted to report on Egyptian colonizations in Greece, they were unlikely to boast of any triumphs of the hated Hyksos. In point of fact, Coleman is wrong to state that Manetho did not mention them. According to Josephus (*Contra Apionem* I.102) Manetho referred to "Harmais, Danaos," whom his readers would immediately have identified with a settlement in Greece from Egypt.

Egyptian records do not refer to Greeks as "traders" but as bearers of tribute. Furthermore, there are claims - for what they are worth - of Egyptian suzerainty if not sovereignty over Crete and the islands in the Aegean.

I do not think that it is necessary to propose invasions or even settlements in the Aegean in order to claim substantial cultural influences there from the Levant and Egypt, especially religious ones. Japan provides a good example of the

massive introduction of foreign culture and religion without conquest. Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka and Japan without foreign conquest, just as Christianity spread to Ethiopia, Armenia and Ireland beyond the Roman Empire. We even know that Egyptian religion itself diffused - without conquest - throughout Europe during Hellenistic and Roman times.

This makes it difficult to mount a case for the "Hyksos invasions" on the basis of the cultural evidence alone. Nevertheless, the strength of the tradition of the "invasions" or settlements and its compatibility with the archaeological evidence has led many scholars before me, notably Frank Stubbings in the article on the subject in the *Cambridge Ancient History*, to propose the same thing. I find their arguments reinforced by the existence of linguistic loans which would fit the Egyptian pronunciation of the 2nd Intermediate period - the age of the Hyksos. Furthermore, there is the increasing evidence of a cultural *koine* around the East Mediterranean provided by the frescoes of Thera in the Aegean, Tel ed Daba'a, the Hyksos capital in Egypt, and Tel Kabri in Gallilee.

Correction

Credit for the photo of Lisa Harris and Susan Pickens in the December/January issue of "the Bookpress" was incorrectly given to Joan Sage. The photographer was Andreis Ozolins.

from the 17th century, that is before the rise of the New Kingdom.

Incidentally, the reason why I believe that the flying gallop motif originated in Syro-Palestine is that it appears to have been associated with other artistic motifs, notably the winged sphinx and the griffin, which clearly came to the Aegean from Syro-Palestine at this time (MMIII). The emphasis on fast animal motion would also ride well with the development of the chariot which would appear to have taken place in South West Asia at around the same time. This is not to say that I deny

that Cretan art and technology were admired and imitated in Egypt and the Levant. In fact I make a point of this in *Black Athena*, Vol. II (p. 439).

I have never claimed that Cretan and Greek cultures were simply reflections of Egyptian or Levantine civilizations, merely that they were massively and repeatedly influenced by them. So - for example - I have no difficulty with the distinctive Aegean features in the Minoan and Mycenaean palaces. Nevertheless, there are also many striking architectural similarities and it is not

see Bernal, p.4

the BOOKPRESS

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An Interview with Abraham Pais

At Play in the Fields of Force

Gunilla Feigenbaum

Books by Abraham Pais:

INWARD BOUND:

Of Matter and Forces in the Physical World

Oxford, 700 pp., \$17.95 paper

NIELS BOHR'S TIMES:

In Physics, Philosophy, and Polity

Oxford, 585 pp., \$35.00

SUBTLE IS THE LORD...

The Science and the Life of Albert Einstein

Oxford, \$15.95 paper

The first time I attended a physics conference was outside Jerusalem in December of 1986. I came in the doubtful capacity of the new wife of a physicist. Until then, my exposure to science had been pretty much nil and walking into the breakfast room the first day of the conference, I found, in one room, some 60 physicists, ages 20 to 70, having their coffee. The first thing that struck me was that there were but two other women and no blacks. The second thing was that these men looked different from any other gathering of white men I'd ever seen. It was in their faces. It was as though they had forgotten to put them on. People, with age, develop public masks they wear, socially acceptable grimaces of sorts, designed not to express feelings and personality as much as to hide them. This was a mask-less room - these men all had the faces of children, no matter the age. In fact, the social expressions were somewhere between nine and twelve years old. It was both appealing and a bit disturbing. Finally, it was impressive - their enthusiasm had never left them.

Since then I've met scads of scientists, and I've been delighted, exasperated and infuriated by them in approximately equal measure. Made to attend dinners with physicists, I've come to research the place-cards before accepting. Some don't talk at all, their boredom with a woman of artistic persuasion painted with painful clarity on their faces, the same way pre-teenagers sit through a dinner in the company of adults who don't talk about anything that captivates them. Others are wildly charming, great raconteurs, and intensely interested in everything and, most especially, in what they aren't acquainted with.

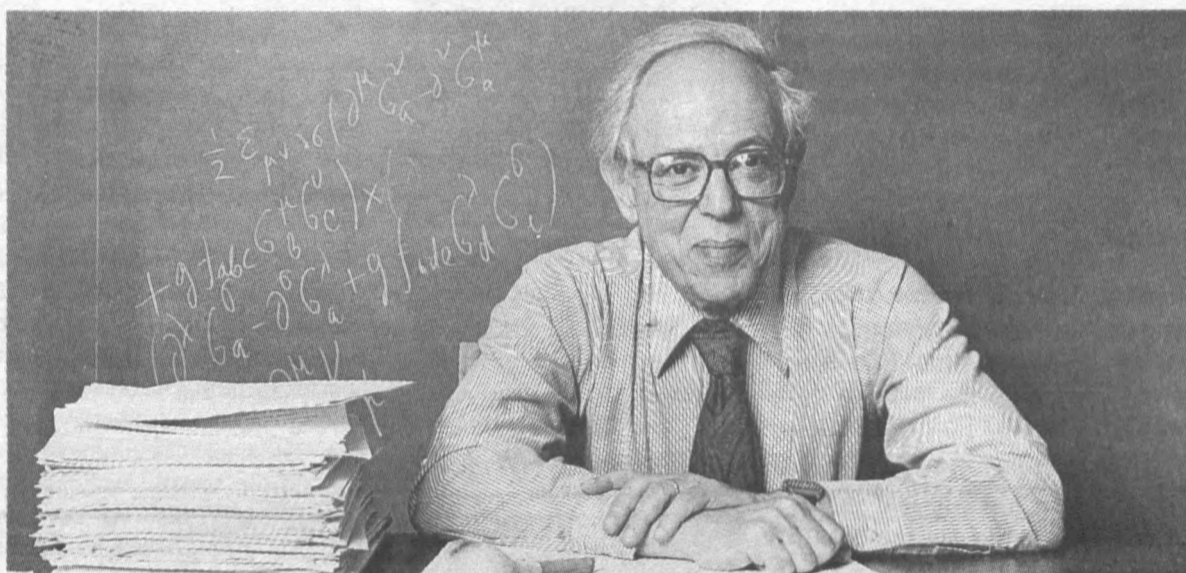
I'm telling this to help you envision Abraham Pais. He's short, with an almost elfin build, and a head that appears too big for the rest of him. His face is a scientist's face - mobile, plastic, highly expressive. He speaks with an indeterminate European accent - he says he has an accent in every language, including his native tongue, Dutch.

Born in Amsterdam, he received his B.S. from the University of Amsterdam and his Ph.D. from the University of Utrecht in 1941, where he worked with Professor Leon Rosenfeld until 1943, when he was forced into hiding in an attic to escape the Gestapo during the Nazi occupation. He says he read all the time, not just science books but everything that was brought to him by the Dutch woman who was hiding

him (which is one of the reasons Bram, as his friends call him, makes a terrific dinner partner at the aforementioned science dinners).

After the liberation of Holland, he went to the Institute of Theoretical Physics in Copenhagen as a research fellow with the Nobel Prize winner Niels Bohr, later to the Institute of Advanced Study in Princeton, where he came to know Einstein.

He is one of the world's leading theoretical physicists and one of the founding fathers of particle physics. Since the early 1980s, he's been writing books on the history of science: a biography on Einstein, *Subtle is the Lord... The Science and the Life of Albert Einstein* (1982), which, among other awards, won the American Book Award for Science, and *Inward Bound: Of Matter and Forces in the Physical World* (1986).



Abraham Pais

Photo: Ingbert Grüttner

His new book, a biography on Niels Bohr, entitled *Niels Bohr's Times: In Physics, Philosophy and Polity* was published by Oxford University Press, and is just hitting the bookstores.

This is not a review of the book; it's an interview with Dr. Pais, but it should be mentioned that this writer, unable to finish a science course in high school, has read the book, largely understood it, and greatly enjoyed it.

We settle down for the interview in Dr. Pais' New York apartment (he spends half the year in Denmark) after he has swept his wife's very lively dachshund off his favorite chair.

The transcript of the interview is sparsely edited - I've kept the sentence structure as it was spoken, to give a flavor of his speech. Unfortunately, I can't convey the animation or the dramatic flavor.

The first question I wanted to ask was a bit of an embarrassment for me - Dr. Pais states emphatically in his book that he doesn't much enjoy being asked to compare Einstein and Bohr. Since I intended to ask him to do so anyway, I thought I'd better get it over with first thing.

G.F. How do you compare Bohr and Einstein?

A.P. I would say first of all that while they have a number of things in common, they are also extremely different. One thing they share is an overriding passion for science - they are always thinking about science, they are even obsessed by it. The second thing they have in common

is they are both men who received all kinds of honors and degrees and so on, but they took it in stride, because they were not concerned with what they had achieved but with what they didn't know - they were always looking further. To switch to differences - Einstein was something of a gipsy, a wonderful one. He lived in many places - I don't mean visited, but *lived*. He lived in Germany, in Switzerland, in Italy, in Czechoslovakia, and of course he lived in the United States. Bohr, on the other hand, while he travelled also a lot, Bohr was first and foremost a Dane. It's crucial for the understanding of Bohr that you understand Denmark in which he's placed. It's not to say that he was a chauvinist, a narrow-minded man - he was always very international - but his soul was in Denmark. He

used to quote a poem by Hans Christian Andersen:

In Denmark I was born,
there are my roots,
from there my world unfolds.

He would quote this very often and he would always stress the words "from there." That was a profound difference between them. Another thing they had in common again - they took physics very seriously, but it was for them really a game. They were playful people. They were never what you might call juvenile, but they took a boyish delight in play. I have seen Bohr sit on the floor explaining a Christmas gift of a train to his grandchildren. He took the train away! He was completely absorbed. These are a few things that come quickly to my mind.

G.F. Are you like that?

A.P. Yeah, I'm also a playful person. You can ask Ida, my wife. Ida sometimes thinks I'm crazy because I switch suddenly from my daily behavior to super boyish behavior. Yes, I think I am.

G.F. So when you met Bohr and Einstein, you felt you were like them?

A.P. No, I cannot say that, not when I met them, because I was very young then, I was in my late twenties. I have never been overawed by people, but still, you know, there was Einstein, and there was Bohr so you don't immediately sense these common threads, but it took me not very long to find out. In particular, Bohr was very special. Bohr loved to play ball, he loved to bike, he loved to ski; he skied to quite an advanced

age. I actually didn't care for sports, except I was a passionate water polo player.

G.F. Was your approach to science similar?

A.P. I hope - I like to think it is. One must always be careful. I'm not blessed with too much modesty, but still, you know, to compare oneself with these people, you take it a little cool, eh?

G.F. And are you a gipsy?

A.P. No, no, no. I feel more like Bohr in the sense that while I am a citizen of the world, I'm born Dutch. I'm a citizen of the United States, I've lived half my life now in Denmark and I'm first and foremost a Jew. That sits deepest in me. I feel at home everywhere and I know one thing - if you feel at home in more than one place it means that you are nowhere really at home... But still,

when I come to Holland, there is some very special feeling that wakens up in me. I love the little small talk of the Dutch... I feel extremely comfortable. But when I leave, I leave. I'm not really a gipsy, but I'm also not imbedded in a single culture like Bohr was. I feel comfortable with many things.

G.F. I noticed when you started talking about Bohr and Einstein that you used present tense. Why do you think that is?

A.P. I don't know. I sometimes do that in the writing, too. There is a technical term for that - it's called historic present. There are lots of tricks to writing which I've learned slowly.

G.F. To know these famous scientists as a young man - did that provide you with inspiration or was it inhibiting?

A.P. Bohr was a tremendous inspiration. Not just because of the science. I don't believe I ever learned that much new science from him. What he taught me was a certain way of thinking. I learned an outlook on life, the world and on culture in a wide sense - I learned a very great deal. In the case of Einstein it was somewhat different. You see, I would say Bohr was a father-like figure. Einstein was more god-like. He was friendly. He was open, he was kind, he was easy for me to talk to, but still, you had the feeling that he is somewhere distant. With Bohr I felt what you may call love, with Einstein I felt affection. Great affection.

G.F. And awe?

A.P. The first time I met Einstein I

was awestruck but it didn't last very long. Bohr was in Princeton and we were talking and he said, "Now, let's go and say hello to Einstein." I said, "That's fine." So we went downstairs and Bohr knocked on the door. By the way, Einstein and Bohr were very fond of each other and they had great respect for each other. They also had great intellectual differences, but that never affected their fondness and respect. So before I knew it, they were on their favorite hobby horse, which was the foundation of quantum physics. They were arguing. I had lived through Bohr's exposures quite a bit before that - I was, in fact, Bohr's assistant for about a year so I knew his views very well. He had also taught me something about Einstein's views, but not enough. So they were arguing and I didn't understand what the hell Einstein *wanted*. Two weeks later, I met Einstein in front of the Institute in Princeton and I said, "I was there, Professor Einstein, when you talked to Professor Bohr." He said, "Yes, I remember," - he was very kind from the start. I said, "I didn't quite get some of the opinions you were expressing. Could I sometime come to your office and talk to you?" He said, "Why don't you walk home with me?" - he was on his way home for lunch. So I walked home with him and we began to talk. That continued for about nine years. I would knock on his door and I'd walk home with him, let's say a twenty-minute walk, and we'd talk - mainly about physics, but also about everything. I was in his home a few times, not very often, and he was in my apartment only once. Yes, I knew the old man and I was terribly fond of him.

(*On lit shelves along a wall are some beautiful Asian and Indian stone sculptures, which provoke the next question.*)

G.F. You mention in the book that Bohr was an art lover. Did you learn about art from him?

A.P. No, not much. We didn't talk much about art. He was fond of the visual arts, he didn't care for music at all. Einstein was very fond of music, very fond. No, what I learned was a philosophical outlook. I don't think I should get technical in this discussion, but it's called "complementarity." It's a way of thinking about modern physics, about observation, the role of observation in science, the relationship between theory and experiment... Such things have been very liberating for me to talk about and have, in fact, had a lasting influence on me.

G.F. Do you think that they were wise men?

A.P. Yes.

G.F. How do you define wisdom versus being simply smart - or don't you think there is a distinction?

A.P. Oh yes, there is a very great difference!

G.F. Can you make a definition for me?

A.P. I never thought of a definition... I think a wise man is a man who has looked at the world, digested the information and learned from it, and learned to accept what is good and to laugh at what is bad - to laugh

see *Interview*, p. 6

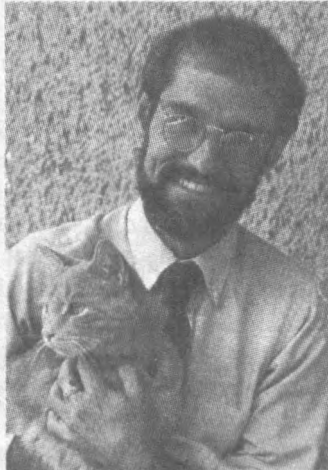
Off Campus at the Bookery

The "Off Campus at the Bookery" lecture series continued last month with Jim Hardesty giving a slide lecture and demonstration on the discovery of X-rays and their impact on physics. "Off Campus at the Bookery" continues to feature lectures and readings on a wide variety of topics, one flight up in the office complex Atrium of the DeWitt Mall, on Sundays at 4:00 P.M.

February 9

Joel Savishinsky

will give a lecture entitled "There's No Place Like (A) Home," based on his book, *The Ends of Time: Life and Work in a Nursing Home* (see related article, p. 11) and will sign copies of the book. The book is a lively account of life in an average American nursing home based on six years of anthropological research in geriatric facilities in upstate New York. Professor Savishinsky's talk will examine the many meanings that late life holds for those who live in, work at, and visit the Elmwood Grove nursing home, and will look at the complex world in which residents, staff, and families wrestle daily with issues of morality and mortality, selfishness and altruism, silence and memory.



March 1

James McConkey

will read from and sign copies of his latest work, *Rowan's Progress* (see cover story). Drawing from his experiences in Rowan County, Kentucky, where he and his wife taught before coming to Cornell University, McConkey tells the story of the positive difference one or two willing people can make in a community, and covers over 80 years of the county's history. *Rowan's Progress* completes McConkey's trilogy of memoirs, which began with *Courts of Memory* and continued with *Crossroads*.



March 29

Molly Hite

will read from her novel, *Breach of Immunity*, and sign copies. Professor Hite has been a member of the English Department faculty at Cornell for the last ten years. She is also the author of two critical studies, *Ideas of Order in the Novels of Thomas Pynchon* and *The Other Side of the Story: Structures and Strategies of Contemporary Feminist Narrative*, and another novel, *Class Porn*, which received much critical acclaim. She is currently working on a book about Virginia Woolf and a sequel to *Breach of Immunity*.



"Art for Good-ness Sake":

Jack Delano Lectures in February

Ana Morales-Zeno

Artist and photographer Jack Delano has been invited by Cornell as A.D. White Professor-at-Large to give several lectures during the last two weeks of February.

Delano was born near Kiev, the Ukraine, and emigrated to the United States when he was nine years old. Since 1946 he has been living in Puerto Rico. Trained at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Delano is a photographer, illustrator, cinematographer, designer, composer, musician and educator. With a fellowship he won in 1936, he was able to travel to Europe where he continued independent studies. During the years of the Great Depression he managed to get a job as a photographer with the Federal Arts Project in Pennsylvania, and in 1940, he was hired as a photographer by the Farm Security Administration to work with a team of photographers who were commissioned to docu-

ment American life during those years.

The Smithsonian Institution recently published a retrospective of Delano's photographic work, entitled *Puerto Rico Mio* (1990). In 1970, Delano returned to the visual documentation which he had begun in the '40s, and planned a project of comparing that period with the Puerto Rico of the 1980's. Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1978, the project culminated in this excellent book of photography. Delano will give the A.D. White Professor-at-Large Lecture: "Art for Good-ness Sake: Politics and Development in Puerto Rico," on Thursday, February 20 at 4:30 p.m. in the Alumni Auditorium at Kennedy Hall, Cornell University.

Jack Delano will be at The Bookery, Dewitt Mall, on February 23 (Sunday) at 4:00 p.m. for informal discussion and signing of his book *Puerto Rico Mio*.

Coleman

continued from page 2

Linear A and Linear B) continued to be used during and after the time they are said to have occurred, whereas there is no evidence that Egyptian hieroglyphics were ever written in the Aegean (the few instances of hieroglyphics occur on objects imported from Egypt and Syro-Palestine). Cuneiform writing, as used for Semitic languages in Syro-Palestine, also has not been found in Greece. Except for dubious arguments about letter forms, there is no evidence for Bernal's claim that the alphabet was introduced to Greece in the 15th or 14th century B.C. On the contrary, since the alphabet is first attested in Greece no earlier than about 750 B.C., it is highly unlikely that it would have been in use for 600 years or more in Greece without its being attested in the archaeological record. Furthermore, neither Linear A nor Linear B show signs that another writing system was in simultaneous use.

Mycenaean Linear B documents occasionally list people with foreign, or possibly foreign names, such as Ai-ku-pi-ti-jo (the "Egyptian") and Tu-ri-jo (possibly the "Tyrian"). The contacts already mentioned provide sufficient explanation for these. Divine names in Linear B, on the

see Coleman, p. 12

Bernal

continued from page 2

merely artistic techniques that were borrowed. There were the close parallels in metric systems and of bureaucratic organizations and even bureaucratic formulae. What is more, flounced skirts with bare tops were commonly worn in Mesopotamia in the late 3rd millennium.

I do not accept that the continued use of the linear scripts makes Hyksos rule of the Aegean impossible. Egyptians ruled or had suzerainty over the Levant for many centuries and, while they had a substantial cultural and linguistic influence on the region, they did not displace cuneiform and the local linear alphabets used there.

We agree that gentilic names from the Levant and Egypt are found on Linear B tablets. The tablets also contain a number of admitted Semitic loan words. I believe that there are many more of these, as well as many words of Egyptian origin. Even discounting my claims, however, it is clear from the very limited material available, that there was a considerable Semitic linguistic influence on Greek during the Bronze Age - at least 600 years before the "Orientalizing Period" of the 7th century B.C. Coleman prefers to emphasize.

see Bernal, p. 12

Slavoj Zizek

continued from page 1

ber to give a lecture on film and ideology.

Zizek's work is unusually interesting because he actively incorporates psychoanalytic theory into his arguments about ideology. In particular, Zizek draws on the work of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, who first brought theories of language to bear on Freudian thinking. Lacan's most forceful argument, which has been widely taken up for discussion in English-language feminist theory, is that our sexual identities - male and female - are not only completely arbitrary,

but are impossible to actually occupy.

Which is not to say that Lacan believes that sexual positions are easily shuffled about or manipulated. On the contrary, Lacan believes that the collective linguistic system, what he calls the "imaginary," is intractable, and that the whole point of sexuality is to perpetually compel us to achieve the impossible positions of male and female. Sexual subjects, then, can neither effectively be who they're supposed to be, nor ever stop trying.

Zizek brings this double-bind to bear on a Marxist framework - and comes up with a sharply different picture of ideology as a result.

As he puts it,

Here lies the difference with Marxism: in the predominant Marxist perspective the ideological gaze [that is, the scrutiny of the state and of the marketplace] is a partial gaze overlooking the totality of social relations, whereas in the Lacanian perspective ideology rather designates a totality set on effacing the traces of its own impossibility. [The Sublime Object Of Ideology, p. 49]

The twist in this conjecture is not that there is no non-ideological reality - although Zizek certainly believes that - but that ideology constructs its own failures in order to keep the social order in control. Ide-

ology, as Zizek describes it, is profoundly ironic and self-mocking. He claims, for instance, that the higher up one travels in the (erstwhile) Eastern European Communist Party power structure, the more cynical the Party officials are about "Communism." In fact, at his Cornell lecture, Zizek remarked that he knew of several former Party members who were disciplined or kicked out for taking party ideology too seriously.

Here Zizek draws an explicit "homology" between the human psyche (as Lacan theorizes it) and the workings of capitalism: both, he argues, rely on a fundamental contradiction in order to compel partici-

pation. The pursuit of sexual identity, in a Lacanian system, depends on the symbolic - and therefore impossible to embody - status of "male" and "female"; capitalism, for Zizek, relies on the impossibility of pure economic equality - in which the relations of production (worker/manager) match what's produced (fair wages all around?). Both systems, in Zizek's argument, are ideological because they cannot possibly work, because they were never designed to "work" in the first place.

What are the consequences of a cynical system of ideology, a system that deliberately makes itself impossible to genuinely enact? How

see Zizek, p. 8

Chicana Critic in the Wilderness: A Conversation with Norma Alarcón

Dionne Espinoza

Professor Norma Alarcón of the Department of Chicano and Ethnic Studies at U.C. Berkeley was visiting Cornell for a two-week seminar on "The (Dis)locations of the Subject within U.S. Latino Studies: Reframing the Quincentenary." Alarcón is the publisher and editor of "Third Woman" Press, and a critic of Chicana/o literature with articles in "Cultural Studies," "Cultural Critique," and "The American Review." Here she talks to Dionne Espinoza, a Chicana graduate student in the English Department at Cornell University.

the Latin-American boom - Garcia-Marquez, Vargas-Llosa, etc. - and Latin-American literature was acquiring a new legitimacy. That led me to ask, what about Chicano literature? Given the development and recognition of Latin-American literature, it seemed like Chicano

origins, such as campesinos. The name was appropriated by high school and college students in the late '60s, to call attention to their double exclusion from Mexico and from Anglo-America. At first, the term Chicano was supposed to mean people who were born of Mexican

identity. After Gloria Anzaldúa's book, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Chicano took on the popular meaning of borderlands, which was already a critical concept for Chicano researchers. Thus, the term Chicano has evolved to mean "in between" people, people betwixt and between

to "between nation-ness," a configuration which gets stronger and begins to acquire more definite contours on both sides of the border as the century ends. It may very well emerge as some kind of third nation, although not necessarily with sovereignty.

D.E. Sounds like what Gloria Anzaldúa alludes to in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, when she talks about a third nation that is not a nation.

N.A. Well, she means that it is the political stance of people who continue to feel betrayed by two sovereign states, but who are as yet unable to determine the direction of their political interventions. I think our political development and involvement have been slow to take form and may be linked to the fact that so few vote, since the ambivalence of living here is such that new immigrants hesitate to acquire legal citizenship.

The cultural love of all things Mexican and Mexico itself is very strong, so there is a sense that to let go of that citizenship is a kind of betrayal. It just shows how vulnerable we are as a people because, on the one hand, Mexico has failed us by not fulfilling its revolutionary promise, while, at the same time, as the majority of Latinos in the U.S. - 70 percent are Mexican-American - we are also the poorest. One must remember this sense of double exclusion when it comes to the question of our participation in this

see Alarcón, p. 9

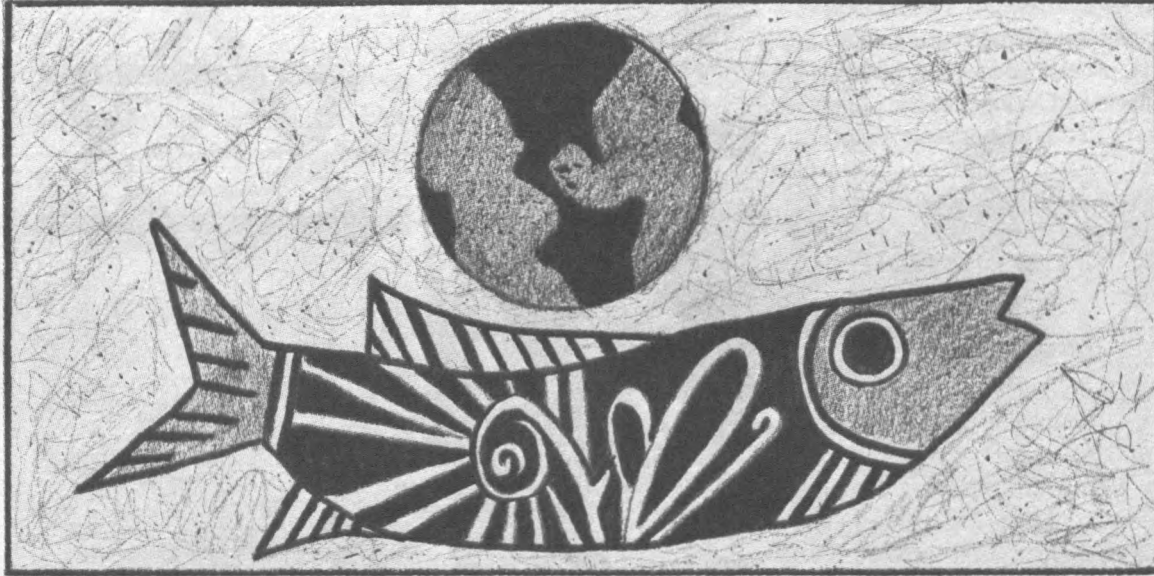


Illustration: Michel Droge

D.E. Let's start by asking how the weather in Ithaca affects you.

N.A. Oh, it reminds me of hibernation. That's what I used to do in Indiana. I would hibernate with my books.

D.E. You told me before that you read mostly from the English canon. How did you begin to take up the study of Chicana/o literature?

N.A. Living in the Midwest as I did for several years before I began to teach at Berkeley, I did not really have many books available to me that related to my own social context, so the literature I did read functioned as make-believe fantasy. When I started graduate work, however, I came to terms with my own critical persona and I became conscious of the incredible gap between my social reality and the one in the English literary canon. At that time in the '70s, everyone was enthralled with

literature was an aberration in the wind, a *chifladera*.

D.E. Maybe you should talk a bit about the term Chicano.

N.A. The more I think about the term, the more I see it as a fascinating and insightful choice by people of Mexican descent to name themselves. Originally it was a pejorative term in the oral tradition, a name upper-class and middle-class Mexicans used for people of Mexican descent who were of humble

descent, but who were natives of Anglo-America.

D.E. That's pretty much how I always thought of the term, along with class implications.

N.A. But it was not possible to control it, because people such as the poet Alurista, for example, who came here from Mexico at the age of 12, called themselves Chicano, and more recently, someone like [Guillermo] Gomez-Peña, who is from Mexico City, has claimed that

two countries who are socially, politically, and economically excluded by both.

D.E. As a reality, concrete and geographical?

N.A. Yes, as a reality, and also the whole notion of the imaginary territory of Aztlán, the legendary land of the Aztec people before they migrated south to Mexico City, which belongs to all people of Mexican descent. This intersection of space and genealogy again calls attention



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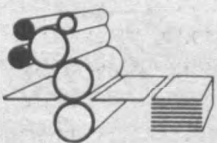
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Interview with Abraham Pais

continued from page 3

at what is ridiculous. They had that, both of them. For a definition of wisdom, I'd have to go through the dictionary... It's a sense one has. I mean what is the difference between affection and love?

G.F. Do you think you have to be smart in order to become wise?

A.P. (Pause) Yeah, you have to be smart, but not necessarily learned smart - you could also be street smart. Street smart is enough to become wise. Wisdom is something one acquires and in most people grows with age - if they get it ever!

G.F. Are you wise?

A.P. I think I have some wisdom. Yes, I have to confess I think so, because I have thought a lot on science, about people, about the world, about world events and so on. It's a little bit pretentious to say so, but since you ask me, I have to say I think I have a little bit of wisdom. I have also some folly, you know. There is a beautiful line - I think it's from a poem and it goes like this:

It is not wisdom to be only wise
and to the inner vision close the eyes
but it is wisdom to believe the heart.

That is perhaps the best thing I can say about wisdom.

G.F. That leaves room for folly also.

A.P. Yes, yes!

G.F. This thing about being smart is a high commodity for physicists.

A.P. Oh yes, indeed.

G.F. People are much taller now than they were 200 years ago. Are people smarter too - that is, would a

genius 200 years ago simply be another smart guy today?

A.P. No, a true genius would always remain a true genius even if you compare it in time. I think Newton was a true genius and would be today. If you go back and look at his writing, you will say the man was a great genius of all ages. I think Bohr and Einstein will be remembered as figures of genius through all the ages. Five hundred years from now - if there is a world then - they will be remembered as geniuses. You must also understand, genius is another word I cannot define. I only know something negative about it - genius is *not* an extreme form of intelligence, it is not. It is singular - it is separate. To recognize a genius takes itself a tiny bit of genius. We all have a tiny little bit of genius.

G.F. It seems to me there was great promise at the beginning of this century in what science could do. Do you think that hope has been fulfilled?

A.P. You mean mankind's great hope? I'd say in the beginning of the century the impact of science wasn't all that strong, or all that appreciated. Take what has happened in my lifetime. When I first flew to America, it took 18 hours, with a number of stops. Now you do it in six hours. When I was a boy in Holland and an airplane flew overhead, we'd all stop to marvel. There were telephones when I was born, but they weren't common. I was ten the first time I heard a radio. A little crystal radio, crackling like mad. All the things that are now common and recognized by everybody sim-

ply weren't there. Computers. Television. The growth and impact of science - not just the positive things - became much more in the realm of our lives after the Second World War: atomic energy, the atomic bomb, the evil of science. The science in the beginning of the century was just understood or foreseen by a handful of scientists.

he remembered it very well. Within a few months after the first paper on the subject was published, his whole life had changed. The impact was so tremendous. The speed of scientific knowledge increased enormously. The things we talk about now - a scientist from the year 1900 wouldn't even know what we're talking about!

G.F. Are these areas still fertile

ground for physicists?

A.P. Yes, because while we have learned very, very much, we are also very aware of what we don't know. There are a lot of things to be understood - there are a lot of open questions all around us where we have not a clue about how to pro-

ceed. A scientist is always happiest when he does not know something. That's my whole personal attitude in life. When I find out that I don't know something, about science or life or anything, I get very happy because then there is something you can find out.

G.F. What is on the cutting edge of science today?

A.P. First of all, there is the chaos phenomenon - that is certainly on the cutting edge. Then there is astrophysics. Modern astrophysics has done tremendous things and is clearly not in any way near the end. You can expect novelty from astronomical observation tomorrow morning when you read the *New York Times*, I wouldn't be surprised! In physics itself, there is superconductivity which opens up great vistas for practical application. Yes, there is a lot of life in the old pony!

G.F. And string theory?

A.P. String theory for my money is for the birds and you may quote me on that. It has beautiful mathematics, it's intellectually challenging, but I don't believe its physics. String theory has not led to one single concrete prediction that can be tested in a laboratory.

G.F. You intend your books - certainly the Bohr book - to be read not just by scientists, but also by a science-interested general public.

A.P. Yes, that is my hope, and I have made a real serious effort to reach a larger audience. It's a hope based not on book sales, because, quite frankly, I don't need the money, but I find it important to try to reach

see Pais, p. 12



Illustration: Benn T.F. Nadelman

G.F. But among scientists, the discovery of the atom and of quantum mechanics must have opened up all kinds of new doors?

A.P. Oh yes! My teacher - Uhlenbeck was his name, was 25 years old when quantum mechanics was discovered, and he told me that

ground for physicists?

A.P. Yes, because while we have learned very, very much, we are also very aware of what we don't know. There are a lot of things to be understood - there are a lot of open questions all around us where we have not a clue about how to pro-

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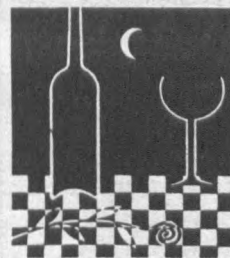
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Eighteenth Century Books as Social Catalysts

Nancy H. Ramage

We are all aware of the use of patterns to guide us in our daily lives, whether it might be sewing patterns, diagrams for making paper airplanes and model trucks, or the plans that architects make when they design buildings. But how many of us have thought of the ways in which book illustrations might have served to stimulate not only a whole artistic movement, Neoclassicism, in Europe and America, but even the way people looked upon their lives and the world around them?

est in antiquity among the upper classes. Ever since the Renaissance, educated people had been reading the classics and collecting whatever antiquities they could. But now, suddenly, archaeologists were uncovering new Roman towns and there was a flood of previously unknown material. Its publication in the *Herculaneum* volumes provided new sources that stimulated, in turn, a renewed interest in antiquity.

The frontispiece of the *Herculaneum* volumes (fig. 1) illus-

that served as an extra impetus to inspire men and women with the ideals of Roman antiquity. This happened just when such sources were badly needed, especially in the restive years when ideas of revolution were fermenting in the minds of the French. The Romans symbolized to them such virtues as hard work and self-sacrifice. A bronze head found in Herculaneum was thought to represent Seneca, a Roman civic leader and philosopher who was known for his stoic charac-

Hamilton's huge and beautifully produced volumes provided accurate and detailed illustrations of the Greek vases (fig. 6) as well as other Greek and Roman antiquities. He made a real effort to get his books into the hands of artists and craftsmen, and especially to Josiah Wedgwood, founder of the Wedgwood factory. Whereas Wedgwood set his artists to copy the shapes of Greek vases (fig. 7), they often altered the designs so that they were quite alien to the ancient models, but suited,

darkening the broken wall in front of the columns, and by showing gnarled trees and bushes and grasses growing out of the buildings. What most observers would have thought of as ugly, he has made dramatic and appealing. And the addition of small figures in the foreground serves to increase the feeling of grandeur.

These three magnificent sets of books and their illustrations were among the most influential of a whole series of works that flooded the homes of the upper classes and the



Fig. 1. Charles III, King of Naples. Frontispiece of *The Antiquities of Herculaneum* (Naples 1757-92).

In the middle of the 18th century, the publication of a number of books created a sensation. One set of volumes, so large that they each stand nearly two feet in height, presented to the public the finds that were being uncovered in the ancient Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. These towns had been buried deep under the lava, mud, and ash that resulted from the disastrous volcanic eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in the year A.D. 79. Although the text of *The Antiquities of Herculaneum* was so pedantic as to be almost unreadable, its engraved plates illustrating the paintings, sculpture, and everyday objects from the homes of the ancient Romans were immediately accessible and appealing.

These volumes provided a fresh infusion to an already thriving inter-

trates the King of Naples, Charles III, shown not only with ermine-fringed robe, regal lion, and theatrical curtain, but also with various archaeological props. Note, at lower right, the spade, pick, sculpture, vases, the ancient coins spilling out of a jar, and the block with inscription. The king tried to control who had access to these books by personally distributing them to his friends, but others soon pirated the books in smaller editions that were readily available to anyone who wished to buy them. Artists, potters, and furniture-makers immediately began to copy the designs, and even fashions imitated the dress of the ancient Romans.

These books had an even more profound effect; for suddenly they provided a rich new group of models

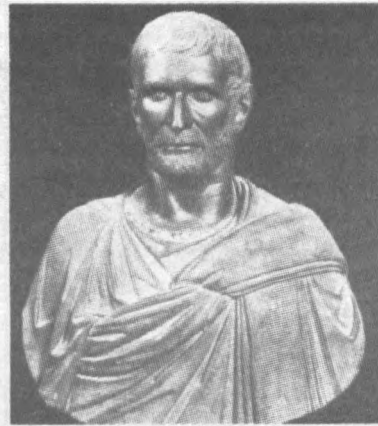


Fig. 4. Bronze bust of Brutus. Capitoline Museum

ter. Figure 2 shows how the original bronze was reproduced in an engraving in the book on Herculaneum, and figure 3 illustrates one of the many copies made of this statue - this one a copy made in the Royal Porcelain Factory in Naples. Although today we are not certain who this statue represents, in the 18th century it was thought not only to be Seneca, but to symbolize the public-minded attitude of intelligent men in the civil service.

Several other Roman heroes also served to inspire 18th-century politicians. One of the favorite models was Brutus, the Roman consul who ousted the last tyrannical king and set up a republican government in the 6th century B.C. The French artist Jacques-Louis David used an ancient bronze bust that had been known since the 16th century (fig. 4) as the model for his influential painting of Brutus (fig. 5). The Roman is shown just after he had ordered the execution of his own sons for treason. The message here, not lost on the French in the very year of the Revolution, 1789, was that everyone must be prepared to sacrifice even those nearest to them, if it should be in the interest of the state to do so. During the Reign of Terror, according to R.R. Palmer, in *Twelve Who Ruled*, "Patriots gave up their Christian names, taking instead the names of classical heroes or of Revolutionary martyrs, such as Brutus... or Marat."

We have seen something of the political impact of the volumes describing the finds in the excavations at Herculaneum. A second set of volumes that would have a major effect on taste and decoration was published around the same time by Sir William Hamilton, British ambassador to the court of Naples: *Collection of Etruscan, Greek, and Roman Antiquities from the Cabinet of the Honourable Wm. Hamilton*. Sir William has been remembered chiefly as the cuckolded husband of Lady Hamilton, lover of Lord Nelson, but in fact Hamilton made major contributions to science (chiefly through his studies of volcanoes) and to archaeology, not to speak of the important role he played as a diplomat.

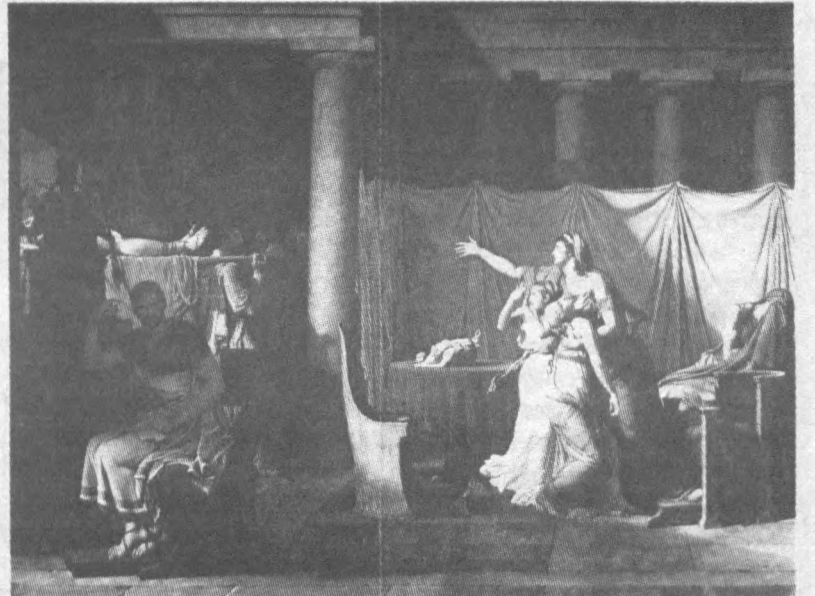


Fig. 5. Painting of Brutus after he has ordered his sons executed. By Jacques-Louis David. Louvre.

rather, the taste of 18th century society. To go one step further, we might say that Wedgwood's designs helped to form the taste of 18th century society.

Yet another series of books that

workshops of craftsmen in the later 18th century. Ancient motifs and buildings became ever more familiar to the European and American public through these publications, and served as the models for every



Fig. 6. Greek vase from *Collection of Etruscan, Greek, and Roman Antiquities* (1766-76) Vol. II, pl. 75.

had a profound effect at this time was illustrated by the Italian artist and architect Piranesi. Indeed, his illustrations were so popular that he sold many of them separately as souvenirs for the many travellers on the "Grand Tour" to take home with them. Piranesi, more than anyone else, taught people to look upon ruins of ancient buildings as both charming and powerful, so much so that some people began to build ruins, in a form that we sometimes call "follies." Figure 8 shows an ancient Roman temple to the god Hercules in the town of Cori, not far from Rome. The columns still stand, but the building has lost its roof, and has been incorporated into a Renaissance structure with a tower. Piranesi emphasized the feel of decay by



Fig. 7. Vase made in the factory of Josiah Wedgwood, late 18th century. Sotheby's sale catalogue April 22, 1981 kind of object in daily life, from chinaware to churches; and they provided renewed interest in the ancient Roman heroes whose reputations so inspired the 18th century, from kings to revolutionaries.

For Further Reading:

Haskell, Francis and Penny, Nicholas. *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture*. Yale University Press, \$17.95 paper.

Rosenblum, Robert. *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art*. Princeton, \$14.95 paper.

Nancy H. Ramage is chair of the Art History Department at Ithaca College, and co-author, with her husband, of *"Roman Art: Romulus to Constantine"* (Abrams, 1991).



Fig. 2. Head of "Seneca" in bronze. From *The Antiquities of Herculaneum*. National Archaeological Museum.

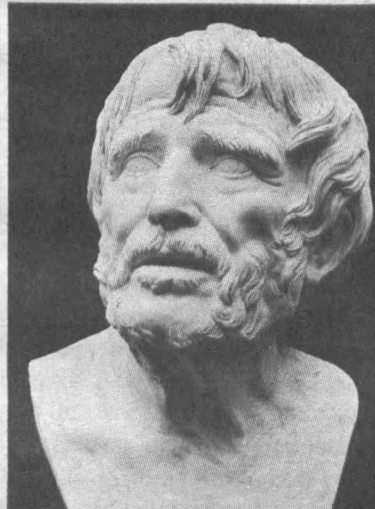


Fig. 3. Head of "Seneca" in porcelain. Made in Naples, late 18th century. Capodimante Museum, Naples.

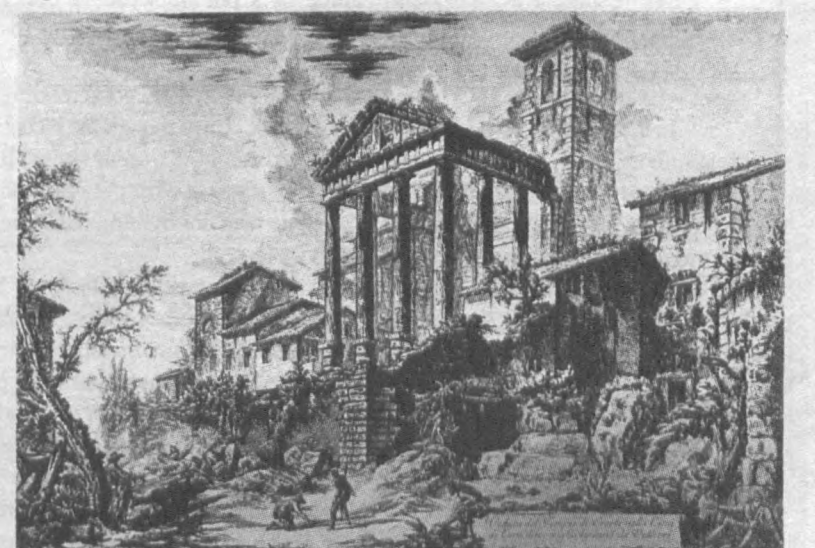


Fig. 8. Piranesi's etching of the Temple of Hercules at Cori. Courtesy of the Department of Rare Books, Cornell University. Photo: Helen Kelley.

Dead Elvis: Patron's Saint

Dennis Merryfield

DEAD ELVIS

A Chronicle of a Cultural Obsession

by Greil Marcus

Doubleday, 233 pp., \$25.00

Dead Elvis, by Greil Marcus, is a collection of essays chronicling what the subtitle calls "Cultural Obsession." These essays range from a personal reflection of the author's experience when asked to write an obituary upon Elvis Presley's death, to a chapter made up solely of quotations without a single word of his own. Including the introduction, there are nineteen essays in all.

At first glance, *Dead Elvis* might appear to be an exploitative exercise - a shoveling together of previously published material covering things Marcus dug up over time: a "no-holds-barred debate over whether or not Elvis Presley had gone to heaven" at a seminar of Christian Elvis fans; illustrations of tabloid headlines and rock albums; two straightforward and wonderful essays entitled "Elvis the Ashtray" and "A View of Graceland: The Absence of Elvis" - the former was a talk at Memphis State on the anniversary of Elvis Presley's death, and the latter is a brilliant comparison of Walker Evans' photographs of Alabama tenant farmers with William Eggleston's "official" pictures of Graceland (In 1983, Graceland Enterprises, Inc., hired Eggleston to take these photos of Elvis' home. According to Marcus, "what one first sees through Eggleston's eyes is no kind of house, but a 1957-77 version of King Tut's tomb"). After a quick skim of the text, a reader

might even suspect *Dead Elvis* is a presentation of Marcus's own obsession rather than ours. Such criticism is valid if we expect a

by a different concern. He writes: "As we form or accept the idea of Elvis that America will live with, or live without, whether it is an idea of

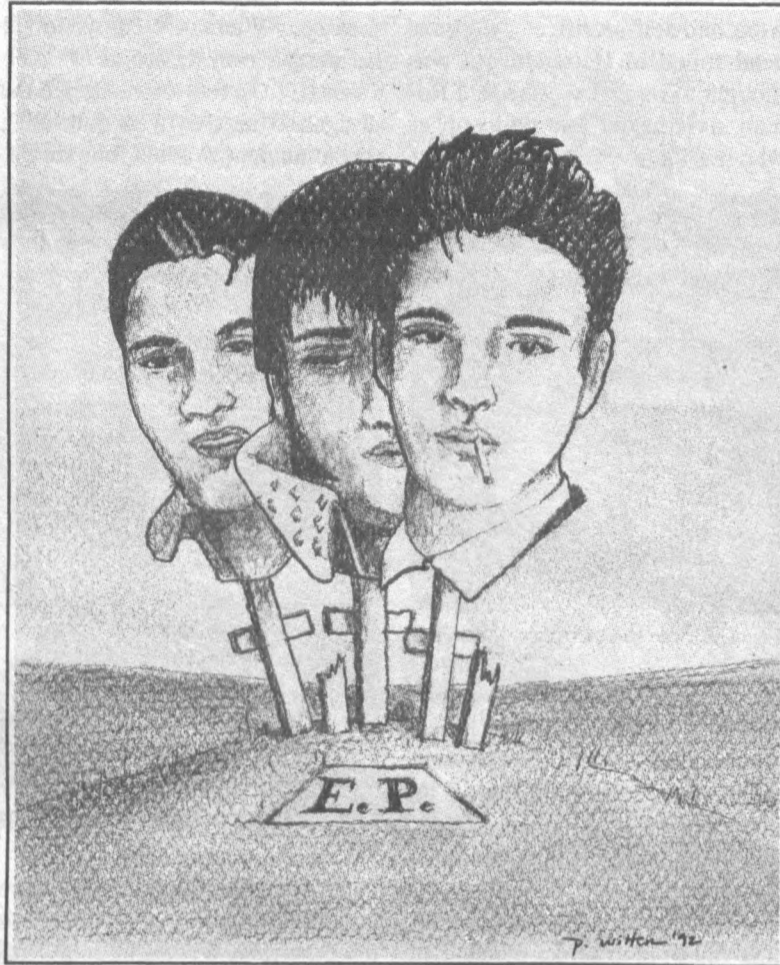


Illustration (c) by Patti Witten/Wisteria Graphics, Ithaca, NY

narrative or treatise, but *Dead Elvis* is neither.

For, although Marcus - who has written extensively on rock and popular music for *Rolling Stone* and *The Village Voice* - is uniquely qualified to discuss Elvis' distinctive contribution to American music and even its cultural significance, he seems, in this book, to be distracted

beauty or an idea of squalor, we are moving farther and farther away from the source of that idea: Elvis Presley's music."

A year ago I travelled with friends to Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia. During our stay, I wanted a quick meal before embarking on our next journey. I happened upon a small, take-out joint, named "Bistro."

I ordered and took my food to the Burger-King-yellow counters lining the walls.

During the next twenty minutes two women entered the Bistro. "Do you have any American burgers?" asked the older woman. "Hurry, hurry!" yelled the younger, "We have a bus to catch." (They were pilgrims on their way to Medjerie, hoping to see the Virgin Mary.) The worker completed the cash nexus, and the women were on their way.

A line now formed at the register. Additional tourists placed their orders. The waiter fielded questions and money relations in French, German, Italian, and Russian. Customers lined the walls.

When all were served, the waiter broke into song. He accompanied the Muzak and Elvis, "Are you lonesome, tonight?" All of a sudden, a German and Russian joined the waiter in the International Muzak chorus.

What happened here? What is happening? Neither the Russian nor the German could speak the language of the other - but both spoke Elvis. The Bistro, the "American" hamburgers, the Burger-King-yellow, the Medjerie pilgrims, the Muzak, the International Elvis - all came together. But how? Why?

A story goes that when the Russians were chasing Napoleon's re-

treating armies back to France, impatient Russian troops had a habit of banging on café tables and bellowing "Bistro, bistro!" (Which means "Quickly, quickly!")

Word has it that Burger-King-yellow and McDonalds' red induce appetite. Can we imagine the Russian troops on a pilgrimage to Graceland, banging on the tables of the Moscow McDonalds, yelling "Bistro, Bistro," and ordering "two all beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions, on a sesame seed bun?" Do the managers of the Moscow McDonalds pipe in Elvis Muzak?

Greil Marcus in *Dead Elvis* does not claim to answer such questions. And who can? Marcus claims only to face them. Perhaps a solid essay at the end pulling these things together would have been nice. (As a reader, I wanted one. As a person waiting for the United States Postal Service to issue the Elvis stamp, I needed one.) At the very least, still, Marcus' ramble through the sights and sounds of the culture industry does allow us to glimpse the social relations which continue to form the icon we call Elvis.

Dennis Merryfield is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Government department at Cornell University.

Zizek

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do political subjects behave in such a system? Zizek argues that the dominant response is a corresponding cynicism, in which people "know very well what they are doing, but do it anyway." That is, subjects of ideological systems are perfectly aware that public claims about what constitutes "freedom" or "justice" or "prosperity" or "happiness" are politically loaded, and amount to "freedom," etc. for a select few - but they nonetheless carry on as if the governing ideology applied to them. Zizek touches on a central figure of American political culture here, an all-encompassing sense of disenfranchisement whose source is not ignorance but knowledge. People just know too well what's going on to oppose it.

The next question, of course, is this: if ideology is a kind of structural impossibility, and if human subjects are in a similar position of being always unable to fully occupy any identity, then is disenfranchisement equally structural? Are we destined to be failed subjects, not only in Lacan's sense of the sexual subject, but also in a Marxist sense of a subject who participates in revolution?

This is obviously a difficult question to answer, for Zizek as much as for any of his critics. Insofar as he believes in political struggle, Zizek has a lot at stake in being able to argue that, although sexual self-identity is impossible, à la Lacan, fractured subjectivity can still bring about a semblance of justice.

Recent critics of Zizek, however, have argued that his commitment to Lacan is precisely what keeps Zizek from being able to envision more forcefully a way to oppose

oppressive ideological systems. The feminist theorist Judith Butler, in particular, has pursued a critique of Lacan that leads her to ask, roughly: who ever said we have to pursue impossible sexual identities in the first place? Although she allows for the psychoanalytic idea of a primal loss that makes "identity" per se impossible, she does not immediately assume that our relationship to that impossibility must necessarily be one of perpetual and obedient failure.

Which is not to say that there is, ultimately, nothing to be found in Zizek's work: whether or not he has got it right about the origins of ideology, he remains a fascinating mapmaker of some of its workings. And, unlike most of his contemporaries, he is infinitely resourceful when it comes to producing illuminating anecdotes to underline his points. In closing, then: here is one such fable, which Zizek uses to emphasize why cynicism ("I know it's just ideology, but I'm doing it anyway") works to keep power relations in place. Recalling the fool who thought he was a grain of corn, Zizek writes:

After some time in a mental hospital, he was finally cured: now he knew he was not a grain but a man. So they let him out; but soon afterwards, he came running back, saying: 'I met a hen and I was afraid she would eat me.' The doctors tried to calm him: 'But what are you afraid of? Now you know that you are not a grain but a man.' The fool answered: 'Yes, of course, I know that, but does the hen know that I am no longer a grain?' [35]

Chris Nealon is a graduate student in comparative literature at Cornell University.

An Interview with Greil Marcus

D.M. How would you describe the reception of *Dead Elvis*?

G.M. The reception has been less thoughtful than I would have hoped. When I write a book I hope to receive reviews which tell me something about the subject or the book itself that I didn't know before. I've seen only one review out of many that did anything like that: Ken Emerson's review in *L.A. Weekly*. He started off with a long quotation from *Moby Dick* where Ahab talks about striking through the mask of Moby Dick. Emerson uses that story to criticize *Dead Elvis* - that *Dead Elvis* doesn't get through the mask.

My response is that *Dead Elvis* is a book about the mask, or about the many masks. It is not about what is behind it.

In the same review, Emerson speaks about Elvis' passage through our culture, since his death, being like Lincoln's funeral train. That is the most marvelous image for this whole story that I've come across - I would have given a lot to come up with it myself.

So Emerson's review is one that really gave me something back; it told me things I really did not know; and it added something to the book.

D.M. How has writing *Dead Elvis* changed you?

G.M. I don't know that it has

changed me at all. It was fun, and it is still fun. I get a kick out of the way this story is continuing. We see the spread of Elvisisms in our culture being like a flood in a museum. And I hope the book is part of the flood. Writing *Dead Elvis* hasn't changed me; it hasn't chilled off my interest in this story or in Elvis' music. In this sense it hasn't put anything to rest.

D.M. What I found most fascinating about the book was its performative element. I sensed a writer trying to make sense of this whole crazy thing. Each chapter contains something new, something else, but each chapter also adds another piece of a puzzle which I don't think any one person can put together.

G.M. I think that's a good reading of the book. Even though the pieces were written at different times, it was in a sense a writer staying on the same beat or covering the same story.

Over the years, whenever I would write another piece, I was reminded of the ones that had come before it. I was aware of which rooms in the great mansion had been looked into and which ones hadn't been. In this way, there ought to be a sense of accumulation - a sense not of progress in an epistemological way, but of time passing on a journey.

D.M. Do you see this Elvis thing then as something unique or as emblematic?

G.M. That's a really hard question. I think right this minute - and I might answer this question differently a week from now - I see it as something unique and special.

If it has an emblematic function, it is its own power.

Linda Ray Pratt, a professor at the University of Nebraska, noticed how Elvis had all the freedom the world could offer, but he could escape nothing. No matter what his riches or his fame, there was always a pinch of ridicule in the way the world looked at him.

Pratt remarkably noticed too many people claiming that the reason Elvis is such an enormous figure is that he was so blank - people could read anything into, or onto, him. She disagreed, however, arguing the opposite - that Elvis' face was so suggestive that there was no way to exhaust its possibilities.

I think there might be a way of answering your question. This guy was not just someone in the right place at the right time. There was something bizarre and wonderful going on, and that really is what the book is about: how history turns on things that cannot be predicted, that cannot be prepared for.

Maus II

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Spiegelman is the child of Holocaust survivors, Vladek and Anja Spiegelman, who emerged from the camps physically intact but psychologically ravaged. They had lost homes, family, friends. Their son Richieu, Art's older, Poland-born brother, was killed. Anja Spiegelman would commit suicide in 1968, while Vladek would become in his old age a miser, a petty conniver, and an egocentric despot. Art himself would take a brief sabbatical in a mental institution, which he would memorialize in an illustrated story, "Prisoner on the Hell Planet" in *Short Order Comix* in 1973. It is reprinted in the first volume of *Maus*.

Vladek and Anja Spiegelman's sufferings were their son's legacy; "It's only when I left home," Spiegelman has said in an interview, "that I got some sense that not everybody had parents who woke up screaming in the night." Their nightmare was hard-wired into his imagination, even though he was only half in possession of the facts, and it is not hard to see the fantastic fables and notes from underground he composed in the 1970s as efforts

to symbolize their torment. Eventually, unsatisfied with his baroque stylizations of the horror, Spiegelman turned to face it directly and began to interrogate his father about his experiences in the camps. It wasn't easy: Vladek Spiegelman's irascibility and iron will were constant provocations, threatening time and again to blow the project up. As a glaring example, he threw away Anja's diaries after her suicide, throwing Art into rage and despair. Indeed, the finishing interviews were not conducted until Vladek was at death's door in 1982. In its complete form, not only has the story proven to be a horrifying account of impossible escapes and miraculous reprieves from the Nazi archipelago of death, as all survivors' tales are, it is also a son's tale of growing up under the curse of this history, in a family whose physical tattoos pale before the mental tattoos left by their ordeal.

The *Maus* books are animal fables in which Jews appear as mice, Nazis as cats, and Poles as pigs, this last an image that initially raised eyebrows when it appeared that Poles

were being maligned. But that too seems to have been defused, since Poles are mainly sympathetic characters, nay sometimes angels, without whose aid Vladek Spiegelman's survival would have been impossible. As for Americans, they are depicted as dogs (from the military "dog faces?") and the French are, naturally, frogs.

In earlier advertising, this volume was billed as *From Mauschwitz to the Catskills*, a brazen title that dared to introduce wit into a chronicle of tragic history. Spiegelman has dropped that in favor of the subtitle, *And Here My Troubles Began*, which is less provocative but which also downplays the book's nervous audacity. And there is audacity aplenty, not least in Spiegelman's resolve to weave his father's story into his own. Art Spiegelman could have taken the easy route of just telling his father's story; that would have been harrowing enough. But he elected the more difficult and more dramatic option of keeping his own story, as the dutiful but embattled son, front and center.

It is the summer of 1982, and Art and Françoise have their Vermont vacation interrupted by news that Vladek has suffered a heart at-

tack at his Catskill resort. It turns out to be a false alarm - Vladek has been playing for attention - but he has in fact suffered another crisis: his second wife, Mala, herself a camp survivor, has absconded with large sums of money and taken off for Florida. We know from the earlier book that Vladek has treated Mala cruelly, and we must suppose that she has finally had all she can take. However, Vladek is also sick, there is an oxygen tank beside his bed, and the story of his imprisonment is incomplete. So there, with Vladek's health failing even as his will grows more domineering, Art resumes the job of harrowing the past, prompting his father for stories, which are grudgingly recited in exchange for services. One of his more excruciating ordeals is a trip to the grocery store to exchange some already-open groceries for items the father would prefer to eat. This is humiliating in its way, but then there was Auschwitz.

In one of those accidents of fate for which there is no accounting, Vladek Spiegelman, upon arrival at Auschwitz, is not sent immediately to his death but held in storage for future work details. Work details generally proved to be a slower death

than the gas chambers, but sure death all the same. In his lager, he meets a Polish Catholic priest who reads Hebrew and is skilled at *gematria*, the system of magic numerology that finds destinies in letters and numbers. The numbers on Vladek's tattoo total eighteen, the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew letter "chai," which also means *life*. The sign of his salvation is upon his flesh. Vladek is destined by some divine providence to live. He will owe the earthly details of his salvation, however, to another Pole, a brutal *kapo* whose desire to learn English - he knows how the war is going to end - prompts him to select Vladek, who speaks English, as his private instructor. From that relationship flows a string of favors, from secret feasts to clean clothing to life-giving information. At one point the *kapo* gets Vladek hired as a tinsmith, fixing camp roofs, through which he avoids several selections.

Vladek finds that Anja is alive in nearby Birkenau, where the gas chambers and ovens are located, and when he is sent there with his crew to do roof work, he manages to make contact with her. Through go-betweens, they exchange letters and see *Maus*, p. 16

Alarcón Interview

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country's political process. Despite this, I feel it is important to have a political presence in this country because this is our home. Obviously, many of us were born in this country, but for the many who were not, this means giving up Mexican citizenship.

D.E. Let's shift a bit to the question of cultural production.

N.A. The production of culture in the United States was seen as a form of Manifest Destiny, with knowledge originating in the elite Eastern universities and gradually unfolding toward the West. But, after World War Two, minority groups began to demand not only social justice, but recognition of their contributions to the cultural formation of this country. In the West, Chicanos and Latinos laid claim to their own cultural heritage, thereby coming to see America "against the grain," West to East.

D.E. How can Ivy-League institutions like Cornell begin to reflect the diverse population of the U.S.?

N.A. Instituting an alternate curriculum or series of courses is all well and good, as a beginning step, to explore the implications of multiculturalism. But multiculturalism is not simply a fair in which every culture has its own booth; it is much more complex than that, as the Latin-American experience demonstrates.

D.E. How so?

N.A. Well, after 500 years of the mixture of peoples, the motifs and figurations and discourses of many cultures are present throughout Latin-America, but you can no longer

say that each group continues to have its own community or protected space. These things have also been happening in the United States, but have not been adequately taken into account. So, for example, the social movements of the '60s laid claim to the idea of separate and discrete cultures within the larger society. But as feminists have discovered, women's culture is not separate and apart, because it is embedded in something more complex.

D.E. Can you discuss Chicano literature in terms of the contemporary politics of multiculturalism? For example, in a recent *Elle* article about Julia Alvarez and Sandra Cisneros, the writer claims that the '80s were the "decade of the black-woman novelist" and the '90s are the decade of the Latina and Asian-American women writers.

N.A. Let me start from another place. Literature has been very important to contemporary cultural politics because it provides us with ways of thinking about identity formation and the whole question of identity. In the case of Chicanos and some of the other Latino groups, there is a discontinuity in language between Spanish and English which tends to fracture the community into diverse enclaves of those who continue to write in Spanish, some code-switching, and others who write strictly in English. Thus, only those Chicano and Latino writers who write in English gain recognition in the Anglo-American culture. It's not so much that the '90s is the decade of Sandra Cisneros, author of *Woman Hollering Creek*, or of

Julia Alvarez, author of *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, as that these are writers who can address a monolingual English-speaking audience now. So, it is possible for them to be featured in mainstream magazines and to be published by the larger publishers. At the same time, there is a great deal of literature in Spanish which English-reading audiences do not have access to. It's a subterranean culture, since most of it exists in the alternate or small presses. By the time average Americans come across Sandra Cisneros and Julia Alvarez in *Elle*, they are seeing only a glimmer of the large literary production that has been going on for decades. I've always been of the opinion that unless you are bicultural or bilingual, it is extremely difficult to understand the cultural production of U.S. Latinos.

D.E. I am with you there. But how does the English-dominant or "hybrid" Chicana negotiate these linguistic battles "within the borders"?

N.A. Well, a writer like Sandra Cisneros, who went through the process of losing Spanish in the school system, as many of us have, has struggled to relearn Spanish because of her bicultural heritage. Of course, she is fully aware that she is English dominant, an awareness that led her to develop literary strategies and techniques and figurations that bring biculturality into her stories. Maxine Hong Kingston (*The Woman Warrior, China Men, Tripmaster Monkey*) is another example of a self-conscious bicultural writer, as is Amy Tan (*The Joy Luck Club, The Kitchen God's Wife*). The English-dominant culture that we have in the United States demands

that its non-Anglo descent writers not only be fluent in English, but also that they represent their difference in English. That is the formula for success for the minority writer in the U.S. who wants to be published in the mainstream.

D.E. Are there any other Chicana writers you see on the mainstream literary horizon?

N.A. The demand now for books by Latina writers is such that major publishing houses like Anchor Books are surveying small publishers to find new writers. According to Bilingual Press, Anchor has picked up Ana Castillo (*The Mixquiahuala Letters, My Father Was a Toltec, Sapogonia, Women are Not Roses*) and Alma Villaneuva (*The Ultraviolet Sky, Mother May I?, Bloodroot*) which means that these two writers, who have heretofore been known only to a small community of readers, are now going to be widely distributed. As a Chicana critic who has been following the literary production of Latino writers over the past 20 years, I sometimes get a sense of déjà-vu as different audiences "discover" these writers. Then you have accommodationist writers like Richard Rodriguez (*Hunger for Memory*), whose work appears in such widely distributed publications as "Harper's" magazine, and you begin to wonder how many times people are going to re-discover Mexico itself.

D.E. Actually, many people are rediscovering Mexico in the form of the "Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries" exhibit that recently toured through prominent museums in New York, San Antonio, and Los Angeles. I viewed it at the L.A. County Museum of Art, where I was

amazed at the size of the crowds. N.A. My perception is that the re-discovery of Mexico at the LACMA displaces Chicanos in Los Angeles, particularly the working-class and new immigrants. I would point out also that such an exhibit, showcasing our trade neighbors, earns a space in a prominent art museum, while the Chicano Art, Resistance, and Affirmation exhibit (CARA), an exhibit that foregrounded the struggles of people of Mexican descent within the U.S., was shown at the UCLA campus gallery. Perhaps, Chicano artists should have been invited to be part of the LACMA exhibit to affirm continuities and links between "us" and "them."

D.E. The Frida Kahlo "craze" seems to be a part and parcel of this phenomenon of rediscovery. What is your reading of this event?

N.A. It seems to me that Kahlo signifies differently for Chicana artists. To them, she represents the recuperation of a forgotten artist, the reclamation of a history and an artistic tradition. But now that Kahlo has become commodified in the United States, it would behoove Chicana artists to find another foremother. In other words, we must stay one step ahead of the mainstream. To commodify Frida Kahlo is to make a particular figure stand in for the entire culture, and this, to me, is a misrepresentation.

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Visit With McConkey

continued from page 1

the common, the ordinary, the mundane can achieve such exquisite value and meaning that the dangers and risks are, ultimately, worth the price of having lived.

Court of Memory (1983), the first of McConkey's three volumes of memoirs (followed a few years later by *Crossroads*, and this month by *Rowan's Progress*), begins on a night 30 years before, when dissat-

isfaction with both a short story he had just finished and the state of the world in general (the cold war and continuing nuclear testing) risked embittering him.

essay about one of Chekhov's short stories, "In the Cart," and begins our interview about his work by relating someone else's tale. It is not unusual to find large egos both in academia and publishing; McConkey, who has taught at Cornell since 1956 and published seven books, including literary criticism, fiction and non-fiction, is not of that ilk. He is neither shy nor retiring, but he is modest and gentlemanly and cour-

enthusiastically. Sounds of dishes and cupboards come from the kitchen, and I wonder if that grey sky is going to fall down as sleet before I take the roller-coaster road back home. The room is quiet, but not with the kind of quiet that one finds in an apartment - if one is lucky. It's the quiet that comes from having the world wait patiently on your doorstep, as it does in the country, rather than break in the windows and seep under the door, as it does in a city, or in an apartment house.

"Maybe it's more like ennui?" I suggest. He nods agreement. Just then his wife, Gladys, comes in and asks if we're ready for lunch. We sit at the round wooden table in the dining room, and over sandwiches and chips and homemade pickles McConkey becomes more garrulous. Perhaps it's because we have our backs to the windows and now face inward to the house, which McConkey has made, over the years, a physical metaphor of his own consciousness. He's ready to talk about his work, not the amnesiac schoolteacher in Chekhov.

Rowan's Progress, McConkey's latest book, is being

The frontiersmen, the hunters, the seekers of a land as verdurous as their dreams, have become small-town merchants, miners on relief, revivalists, salesmen of burial insurance and old Fords, bootleggers who are jailed only during election week, farmers of land tilting to the valley floors," McConkey wrote in *Court of Memory*. He was fresh from World War Two and the war had not yet been distilled from experience to memory; his three boys were young and vulnerable as all little children are. Yet in the midst of the war nightmares, the fears for the children, the heavy work load, McConkey was still able to salvage some of the goodness of life, tuck it safely away in his memory, and resurrect it years later in *Rowan's Progress*.

"I have discovered my plot in the relation that exists between my present and my past," McConkey says in the introduction to *Court of Memory*. And, "...a remembered merry-go-round - something so trivial as that - can be to the mind a glowing seed, a whirling nebula which, drawing to it a series of other experiences, gradually becomes the world as we know it," he explains in *Crossroads*.

The world as McConkey knows it began in Lakewood, Ohio in 1921 and very soon expanded to include more towns and countryside than most people see in a lifetime, much less one childhood. His father, whom McConkey describes as a perfectionist and a dreamer, was a restless man with a habit of regularly uprooting his family and moving on. "We moved about once a year," McConkey recalls, shrugging slightly. His fists tense, as if in remembrance of all those suitcase handles carried through the years.

In the '30s his family, like much of America, moved straight into the Great Depression. Times got too hard and the restless father packed his bags one more time, and this time left alone, without his wife and children. There was an awful, all-night journey to cousins not notified in advance, for fear the family, minus one, would be turned away. Much of this experience is reworked

into fiction in the short story "Night Stand"; but it is in a different short story about his own children, "Of Brotherhood and a Dehorned Calf," that McConkey writes, "Possibly brotherhood can be found in nobility of action and the virtuous cause; but I have discovered it... chiefly in feelings of shared helplessness..."

Then there was the day in fourth grade when a teacher read McConkey's essay on Columbus out loud to the class, praising it. That was the day McConkey knew he would become a writer. "That teacher was very important to me and now I don't remember her name." McConkey is visibly distressed.

At some point the restless father returned and remarried the mother who had been waiting for him. There are love stories in McConkey's work, but they are stories with the weight of endurance and patience, about loving in the face of all odds, against what passes, for other people, as reason.

After high school, Cleveland College, and a stint in the army from 1943 to '45. McConkey's first book, *The Novels of E.M. Forster*, was published in 1957. Forster and Chekhov, about whom he has also written (*To a Distant Island*, 1984), are McConkey's two most important influences. Of *Court of Memory*, Annie Dillard wrote that it was "the greatest nonfiction masterpiece of the twentieth century."

Short story collections and a novel, *Kayo, The Authentic and Annotated Autobiographical Novel from Outer Space*, along with *Crossroads* and *Rowan's Progress*, round out McConkey's body of work to date.

"One book just about every seven years," Gladys explains. "Sabbaticals."

The point is well made. McConkey is committed to the teaching profession, as well as to writing. Or rather, was. Recently retired, he admits to some ambivalence about this new condition.

"There are a lot of good things about teaching," he says. "It's a

see *McConkey*, p. 15



Photo: Peter Morenus

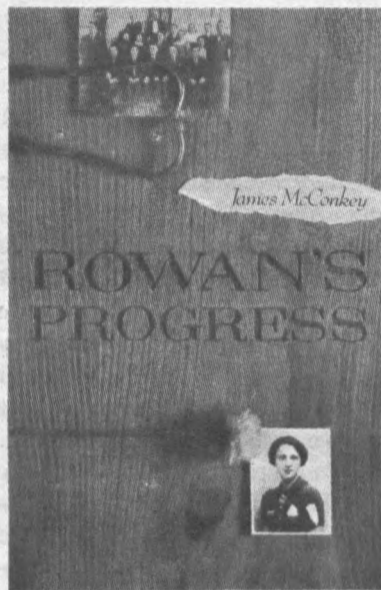
I ask McConkey if he has ever felt that way about Cornell.

"Bored? I can't remember ever being bored," he reflects cautiously. "I know I haven't lost my memory. And I feel lucky to be here." A sweep of his hand in the direction of the windows indicates that 'here' means much more than Cornell. There is a field across the street, and a hill beyond that, and more hills beyond, hunched with ancient patience in the grey day. 'Here' is the upstate countryside and the larger universe surrounding it.

"Very lucky," he repeats, looking out the window with Chekhov's memory-poor schoolteacher still very much on his mind. It makes sense that James McConkey would be preoccupied with another teacher's amnesia: his literature, after all, is about remembering, and it is often a cold, late winter night in upstate New York, with his family sleeping safely upstairs while he ruminates downstairs, that is the starting point for his writing. The caretaker paces and thinks while the rest of the world sleeps.

McConkey shoos one of the dogs off the sofa with an apology - whether to me or the dog, I can't tell - and we sit, facing the window. "This might seem dull to apartment dwellers, I suppose," he comments. He has lived in apartments; one has been immortalized in short stories written about a work-leave he took with his family in Paris, where he didn't work much. It is clear from his expression and his fiction that he does not agree with apartment dwellers on what is dull and what is not.

"You know," he continues, "boredom is typical in Chekhov. But the word is different in Russian. It's not completely pejorative." We listen to the country silence around us, and watch the two dogs groom



published this February by Pantheon Books. It's set in Rowan County, Kentucky, a spot McConkey and his wife taught in before coming to Cornell, and covers some 80 years of the county's history. It is, McConkey says, a book about the "strength and nature of goodness." One of the characters in the book is someone McConkey remembers from his years there, a woman who, because she herself believed in the strength and nature of goodness, was able to provide spiritual and intellectual richness to a community in need. *Rowan's Progress* is about the difference one or two people can make, if they are willing.

Like other works by McConkey, it is a work that has its genesis in memory. Over lunch, he and Gladys tell tales of their life in Kentucky. Though the years have provided a safe distance between them and some of the more daunting stories, they still shake their heads and their eyes widen as the tales weave back and forth in time, darning the fabric of their life together.

"In the forested hollows of eastern Kentucky, there still are people who, regardless of the antennas on the cabin roofs, will die without leaving the county of their birth. Mostly, they are of Scotch descent; their names, like the hills, gradually erode, and the Caldwell walls are now the Caudills and the Caudles.

In the attempt to solve human problems that often seem intractable, Louise had told me, I remembered, "You just do one little thing after another," and she had said, "If it's a help especially to the little kids, it makes you a better person."

She had come to me in a dream as a kind of antidote to my sense of a human world becoming unreal and this was what she had told me. I felt like a little kid, myself. For the first time in my life I was beginning to see that my own sense of "reality," of whatever gave substance to human affairs, was a moral construction, one that required some possibility of goodness; without that possibility, the world was phantasmagorical.

In June, I watched the hummingbirds drawing nectar from the mock orange and honeysuckle blossoms in our front yard and listened to the bullfrogs recently come to our pond, their diesel-locomotive blare drowning out the rubber-band twang of their long-established smaller brethren. In July, I watched the changing patterns of cumulus clouds that never gathered together in sufficient bulk to produce more than sporadic flares and a spattering of heavy drops in the dust, never a drenching rain, and saw the swallows darting just above the grass to catch insects and the hawks floating in the thermals high above us all. I watched and listened to these manifestations of the natural world that were oblivious to my anxieties, indifferent to anything I felt or believed, and wondered if I trusted myself and my species enough (look at the horrors and depravities we commit!) to tell a story of human goodness that, in transforming a tiny Kentucky county, had implications for us all.

— From *Rowan's Progress*

Understanding Life Backwards

Joel Savishinsky

The image of old age in the modern age is a fairly dismal one. A nurse at an institution where I once volunteered complained that the process of getting old is reduced in the popular mind "to the 3-Ds of decline, depression, and death." For years now, her words, and the image she decried, have haunted me. With my students, I have been trying to make sense out of how our society defines the nature of late life.

As an anthropologist, I am supposed to study myths, not live by them. But an anthropologist without myths would be a person without a culture and, as an American, I have been raised on the myths that shape my own society. To many of my compatriots, old age is joyless and terrible, and nursing homes only make a bad situation worse. They are seen as the last resort of those who can no longer help themselves. In the apparent uselessness of one's later years, such institutions symbolize rejection, and they sometimes rub the salt of neglect into the moral wounds of marginality. This sad, spoiled picture of late life contrasts with the equally extreme myth of the Golden Age of old age, a once-hallowed but now suspect image. The imagination of our culture has transformed the old dream into a new nightmare.

Both literature and the social sciences have provided some of the substance on which this new image feeds. Novels, poems, and dramas portray the desperation of the aged, the indifference of some who could help them, the frustrations of others who try. With less vividness but more detail, researchers have tried to record the realities of older people living in their own communities, as well as those who lack the grace of independence and must make their home in an institution.

The imaginative and scholarly results often have a tragic ring. Disembodied and desiccated images pervade our poetry. Eliot's *Gerontion* is "an old man in a dry month," living like a "dull head among windy spaces." For Yeats, "An aged man is but a paltry thing,"

A tattered coat upon a stick." Shakespeare, parading the seven ages of man across the world's stage, declares the "Last scene of all, / That ends this strange eventful history, / Is second childishness and mere oblivion; / Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."

Social scientists who look at the aged have tried to see them as flesh and blood and spirit rather than as mere metaphor. One of the earliest accounts of nursing homes was given in Jules Henry's *Culture Against Man* (1963), a book which describes



Illustration: Benn T.F. Nadelman

a process of "pathogenic metamorphosis" through which elderly patients were transformed into animals, objects, and other sub-human forms by repeated degradation. A much more benign picture of institutional life was Jaber Gubrium's *Living and Dying at Murray Manor* (1975), a study which nevertheless detailed how isolated administrative "top staff" could be from the "floor staff" who actually gave care to the elderly.

One of the most personal accounts ever written of institutional existence was Carobeth Laird's *Limbo* (1979). Written by an 81-year-old anthropologist who was placed - involuntarily - in a private Arizona facility, the book bears the pointed subtitle, "A Memoir of Life in a Nursing Home by a Survivor." Laird watched with dismay as her independence, assertiveness, and identity dissolved under the regime of patronizing treatment to which she and her peers were subjected. Though she was eventually rescued by friends who took her into their own home, this was only after Laird had nearly lost all sense of hope and self. At one point, she later wrote,

she even refused to join a day-trip to a nearby zoo because "I felt too much like a caged animal to enjoy looking at other caged animals."

Unlike Laird, my own connections to both nursing homes and animals have been mercifully more positive. I got involved studying geriatric facilities, in fact, because I had once driven dogteams in the Canadian Arctic, where I travelled extensively among native people leading a hunting, fishing, and trapping way of life. The mutual dependence I observed there between Indian families and their dogteams got me interested in not just the technical, but also the emotional role of domestic animals in other cultures. Several years after I left the North, Cornell's Veterinary College began a series of pet therapy programs in upstate nursing homes, and I agreed to examine and evaluate the impact of these efforts. It was a chance to study a new form of domesticity.

Three of my students and I began this project by visiting the geriatric institutions each week with our own or borrowed animals. We found that the pets not only had many unintended effects on the elderly, but that the nursing homes themselves were a complex and subtle world of their own. At Elmwood Grove, the facility I became most deeply involved in for the next seven years, I came to appreciate how patients, caregivers, and families were caught up in contradictory attitudes toward mortality and morality, silence and touch, altruism and intimacy, and caring and curing. In my book *The Ends of Time: Life and Work in a Nursing Home*, I describe what I learned at Elmwood from the residents, staff, visitors, and volunteers whose lives converged there.

One lesson was the power of animals to break the grip in which silence held the elderly. As symbols of a lost domesticity, pets triggered stories and memories of childhood, families, farm work, and children. Residents who would have been stigmatized for talking to themselves about these topics could talk with impunity to the animals. Many pa-

tients soon moved past the pets, however, and attached themselves to the volunteers who had brought them: residents proved to be as hungry for human companionship as for that of animals. This surprised many of the volunteers, who had originally thought of themselves simply as "transporters of pets," as secondary actors in a supportive role; but the elderly placed many visitors at center stage, casting them as members of their "new" or their "real family." The patients' domestic message was impossible to miss.



Some volunteers welcomed it as a sign of an unexpected intimacy, an acknowledgement of value they had not anticipated. But others backed away from the demands that the very word "family" implied, finding the expectations for regular support and personal attention to be more than they had bargained for.

Conversations with residents covered a broad spectrum of topics, two of the most compelling being mortality and morality. The pets in the room, for example, were commonly associated by patients with long-lived animals they had once owned; their proud remarks about canine and feline longevity were an indirect means of expressing both the benefits of good care and their long-term hopes for themselves. Anxieties about death could be voiced through the same medium. An elderly couple who lived at Elmwood liked to share bittersweet memories of a brother-and-sister pair of cats they had kept for eighteen years. They told how the brother had passed away within a week of his sibling's death, a sequence that reflected the intensity of this couple's own relationship and their fears about its indissoluble bonds.

The moral tenor of residents' remarks often blended praise and condemnation with humor. One woman lauded her sister and brother-in-law for taking her collie when she had to enter Elmwood. But on another occasion, reflecting on the same events, she decided that they had "kept the dog but got rid of me." A different resident, who had suffered the death of several roommates within just one year, speculated that a solitary goldfish she had been keeping in her room might have died from the same loneliness she was enduring. But on a later occasion, settled in with a friendly new roommate, she joked: "You know, I used to talk to that fish all the time. Not that she answered, but... I think I talked her to death."

Finally, there were things that could not be said and acts that were hard to perform — the words lost in the silence of dementia or withdrawal, the moments of touch which failed to occur because of cultural taboo. It was difficult for staff and visitors to simply *be* with residents without benefit of conversation and, where words failed, to reach out physically to those who could not be reached in other ways. I realized that what the chronically ill elderly sometimes needed was the simple laying on of hands and a silent being together — means of communion and communication that Americans find uncomfortable, but which need to be learned if we are to enter the place that is now the world of the old. The pets were not a panacea, but their quiet, tactile presence helped to bridge the chasm between the frail aged and those who could care for, but not cure them.

Understanding the elderly does not take exceptional skill — it does require the will to share part of the common and everyday quality of their lives. For readers who want to enter that realm in print before facing it in the flesh, there are some wonderful books: May Sarton's moving novel of nursing home life, *As We Are Now*; M.F.K. Fisher's

see *Nursing*, p. 15

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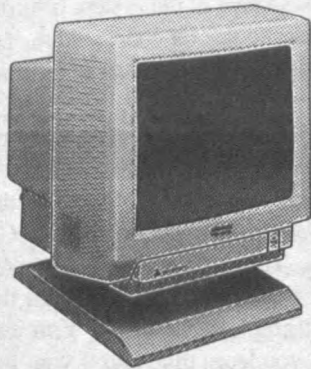
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Pais Interview

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out. I try to keep - especially in the Bohr book - the mathematics to a minimum. There are sections in the book where I said to myself, "Here I cannot compromise, either I explain it in technical terms or I cannot explain it at all." I marked those sections with a star so you can skip those pages if they look too forbidding. If you read around such sections, I think the book is accessible to any intellectually curious and reasonably intelligent person. That is the purpose of the enterprise.

G.F. Do you think the general public is more interested in science now than in the past?

A.P. Much, much more! I believe there is a hunger in the general public to come a bit closer to science, because there is so much more of an awakening that science affects our lives and, therefore, they want to know about it! It's healthy and wonderful.

G.F. Do you think that this interest affects the turns that science takes, such as what gets funded?

A.P. The interest by the general public is very important to scientists because we need a little tiny bit of every tax dollar to pay for our equipment, which is expensive. It's part of how science is done, that the equipment gets bigger and more expensive. Bigger does not mean better necessarily, but it's something unavoidable - inevitable. So, we need for that reason to appeal to the general public. That's one reason. And we are, of course, always happy when people take an interest, because to be a scientist, you can feel on occasion a bit isolated. When I come to a party, and I walk up to someone and say, "I'm a physicist," ... "Oh, physics, that's too difficult for me!" I have heard that so many times. It doesn't bother us, but you'd like to feel that you are better understood a little bit. Also, when you sit in your little corner and scribble your little thoughts down...

G.F. Do you have any worries that environmental concerns will turn the country anti-science?

A.P. I think environmental concerns have already turned into anti-science sentiments, and I think that's due to a lack of understanding by the public. We scientists are not the guilty party. To give a famous example, take the crucial example of the atomic weapons. Atomic weapons rest on a mechanism known as fission. The people who discovered fission weren't out to look for big weapons. They were looking for the answer to a very sound, purely scientific question: namely, what happens if you shoot neutrons into uranium? Why would they be interested? Because uranium was the heaviest atom known on Earth. Neutrons like to stick to nuclei. So, maybe you can stick some onto uranium and make it bigger than anything you've ever seen, which is a very sensible question. And then! The astonishment! You didn't get bigger nuclei, but the uranium just broke in half! When Bohr heard this first - he told me this several times - he slapped his forehead and said, "Why haven't we thought of this before!" because once it was done, it was more or less obvious that it had to happen. In fact, it explained why uranium is the heaviest nucleus

species on Earth - because if you shoot more neutrons on it, it breaks up. There you have a very fine example of scientists in their innocence - there is nothing impure about it, you know - the question is pure, honest, and very interesting. The answer was total bafflement, and then, of course, the shit hits the fan, as they say, and then, well, things start to happen.

G.F. If the scientists are not responsible, then who is?

A.P. The government! The government is responsible. We did not make pollution. Heavy industry made the pollution. We are sometimes falsely accused of polluting the atmosphere with this, that, or the other... radioactive radiation... Scientists haven't done that! Poor construction of nuclear reactors has done that. We are asked for our advice on the construction of nuclear reactors, but construction firms build them, so I don't feel personally in any way guilty or bad about it. I feel concern, but my concern is not different from yours. I feel concerned as a citizen of the world.

G.F. Many of the scientists who directly or indirectly contributed to the bomb became politicized and politically active later on. Do you feel they made a political impact?

A.P. I think they made some, but not as much as they might have liked. The people who worked on the bomb had different reactions. Some said, "Well, we made it, but we *had* to make it, and that's that and I don't want anything to do with weapons anymore. I quit, now I go back to lab work." Others felt some sort of guilt about it. Yet others said, "Well, we don't feel guilty, but we are now obliged to help control the situation." They have been listened to sometimes with respect, sometimes not, but basically it has always been in the hands of the politicians. Why is the political atmosphere now so different? That's owed to Gorbachev, not to the Russian physicists or the American ones.

G.F. Do you find the current generation of scientists politically concerned?

A.P. I think scientists have been politically concerned since World War Two. The concern is continuing. I listen to the news and worry and think about it and discuss it with my friends, and I know that all of us have a sense of dread and express concern. There are colleagues of mine who testify before Senate committees on inter-continental ballistic missiles, on atomic energy, on all kinds of things. Some of these people are very good at that.

G.F. There have been some books written that try to bring together religion and science. Do you have any thoughts on that? Your book mentions that Bohr was an atheist...

A.P. Yes, and so was Einstein. My advice to such attempts is, go with extreme caution. But I would also like to add that science and religion are in no conflict with each other at all. What is science, what drives a scientist? He's driven by the fact that there is an order in nature, which has yet to be discovered, and that he'd like to find a little part of. Now, can he prove that there is order in nature? He cannot! It is a belief! Therefore, in a sense, I think scientists will ultimately be the last of the

religious people. It's a religious belief - and I call a belief "religious" when it has to do with the universe as a whole, cannot be founded on a rational argument, and nevertheless drives people. I'm driven by the fact that, tomorrow, some new simplicity will be found. Do I know that there is a simplicity? I know it for sure. *How* do I know it? Because I *believe* it, not because I can prove it. I don't see a deep conflict. Personally, I'm not a religious person at all in the sense of organized religion, but I have great respect for religion. I come from a religious family.

G.F. It seems that, during the earlier part of this century, the best scientists were coming out of Europe, and they were Jews. Later, maybe Americans dominated. Do you think groups or nations dominate science for a period?

A.P. Yes, but I don't think it has much to do with nations, or with the great intelligence of one nation over another. It has to do with, for example, economic circumstances, with material support, with growing awareness of the importance of science. If you look back at America in the last century, there were already very fine scientists, but they were individuals, they weren't even necessarily linked to a university. Then comes the Industrial Revolution that awakens people to the practical benefits of science.

G.F. There are a lot of concerns that America is not bringing forth students who will make a next generation of scientists.

A.P. The concern is quite justified. In the United States, we still have a good number of students in science, but the percentage of foreign students who come here to do science is relatively increasing. Now, I welcome anyone who wants to be a scientist, regardless of national origin. Still, you'd like for the American people to take part in that, because it's healthy, it's part of a culture, it's a cultural phenomenon. Why young American students don't go for science is a subtle question, having to do with how science is appreciated by the newspapers, by the public at large. There are perceptions about science that I consider wrong, for example, that science is the culprit of pollution, as I said earlier. You have to educate people not only in science, but also in the meaning and value of science. Here, the great weakness of the system lies in the high schools. Of course, there are fine high schools, but they are few and far between. People come out of high school illiterate, unable to write a simple, declarative sentence! There is a certain softness in how the American educational system works. There is all this business about electives. I never was asked to elect anything. I was told, "You learn this, you learn that, and if you don't want to, then you go to another school!" It takes a certain knowledge to know what is worth knowing. The 1968 revolution in Europe was an intellectual scandal of the first order, where students took over the role of faculty - it was simply laughable! I thought it was hilarious, and I knew it couldn't last. It's not a question that professors are elite, but they have spent their lives trying to understand what is worth knowing.

G.F. When you write books on the history of science, then, you write them with something of a mission?

A.P. Yeah, definitely! I like for people to know more about science. That's why I always write about mistakes - not a plus sign for a minus sign, but intellectual mistakes. The inevitability, at certain times, that people have to make mistakes in order to find out what is the right way. Science does not go in a straight line. It's important not to be afraid to make mistakes - you have to teach that everybody makes mistakes. That's why I like to write about great men making mistakes, not silly mistakes, but mistakes that make sense, where you can see how they had to say, "This is the simplest way of doing it" - but it wasn't.

G.F. Do you have another book planned?

A.P. Well, I haven't planned to sit on my laurels - if I have laurels. I have certainly planned to do some-

thing again, but honestly I don't know what. I have lists of topics which I think about, make notes about, but first I take a little break.

I thank Dr. Pais for his time. He puts out his Havana cigar and gets up, and the dachshund, who's been curled up like a doughnut by his feet, springs to life again and attacks my shoelaces. Dr. Pais helps me on with my coat and kisses me goodbye on both cheeks, European style.

A little break, I think as I walk out.

Little indeed, if I know Abraham Pais.

Gunilla Feigenbaum is better known to Ithaca in her previous incarnation as Gunilla Mallory Jones, playwright and Ithaca resident from 1971 to 1986. She's currently living in New York, painting, and married to physicist Mitchell Feigenbaum.

Coleman

continued from page 4

other hand, show little or no foreign influence. For instance, although the names of many of the Greek divinities known from later times (e.g., Zeus, Poseidon, Hera, etc.) are mentioned in Mycenaean Greek Linear B documents (dating to the 2nd half of the 2nd millennium B.C.), the names of the most common Egyptian and Canaanite gods (e.g., Amun, Osiris, Isis, Seth, Baal, Resheph, etc.) do not occur.

Bernal's linguistic arguments depend to a large extent on the existence in the Greek language of personal names and places which do not have demonstrable etymologies in the Indo-European family of languages to which Greek belongs. Inasmuch as these really represent a foreign element in Greek (it is notoriously difficult to find etymologies for proper nouns), other, more plausible candidates than Egyptian may be suggested as sources for many, or most of them. We know, for instance, that the Greeks borrowed some place names from the pre-Greek inhabitants of the Aegean and other loans from that source may go unrecognized. Foreign words may also have come into Greek from the language of Minoan Crete, which had great influence on Mycenaean Greece in other ways. Although the Minoan Bronze Age script (Linear A) has not been deciphered, there are good reasons for thinking that the Minoan language did not belong to the Indo-European family of languages. Hence, there is no need to look beyond the Aegean for sources of non-Indo-European loan words in Greek.

Another serious problem with the putative Hyksos invasions of Greece is that recent revisions to Aegean chronology would require them to have taken place in the 18th century B.C., a very unlikely time, inasmuch as it predates the Hyksos rise to power in Egypt.

In short, there are good reasons for denying such strong cultural influences on the Aegean in the 2nd millennium as Bernal postulates. Mycenaean material culture and society, as revealed by archaeological and documentary evidence, differs in many ways from the societies of Egypt and Syro-Palestine. There is no indication in written texts or from any other source that the Egyp-

see Coleman, p.16

Bernal

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I accept that "neither Linear A nor Linear B show signs that another writing system was in simultaneous use." On the other hand, until quite recently, there were no signs in the corpus of 1st millennium cuneiform tablets - which is far greater than those in syllabaries from the Aegean - that the Aramaic alphabet was the common script of Mesopotamia and Syria. Similarly, if only some of the *kanji* inscriptions on stone and metal survived in Japan it would be difficult to tell that *hiragana* was the common script used on paper.

Coleman dismisses as "dubious" the arguments put forward by Naveh and myself "on the basis of Greek letter forms." I can find no better way in which to date the diffusion of scripts. It is extremely implausible to suppose that a significant number of Greek letters could have recapitulated the path of development of the West Semitic letters. For instance, is it likely that the standard Greek "A" should have returned from the contemporary 10th-7th century Phoenician character to a form identical with the Canaanite "A" used before 1200? On the lack of attestation of *dated* inscriptions, Coleman, as an archaeologist of Cyprus, should know that gaps of many centuries can exist between attested forms of what are clearly the same scripts.

On the question of loan words, my linguistic arguments do not "depend to a large extent" on names but on a wide range of names *and vocabulary*. Furthermore, I cannot accept that, because it is difficult to trace the origins of proper nouns, one should not try to do so.

Coleman ends this paragraph with the sentence: "Hence there is no need to look beyond the Aegean for sources of non-Indo-European loan words in Greek." Why is it more plausible to "postulate an origin" in a "Pre-Hellenic" language that we don't even know existed, without first checking in the attested languages of peoples with whom we know - from historical and archaeological evidence - that the Greeks were in contact over more than 1,000 years? Why should one assume isolation of the Aegean, when analogies from other parts of the world and evidence from other sources of information all indicate

see Bernal, p.16

Invisible Energies: Electromagnetic Fields and Human Health

Joel Ray

Is exposure to non-ionizing electromagnetic fields - emitted by power lines, communications transmitters and radars, video display monitors, and the increasingly wide array of electrical devices - a risk factor for human disease?

Twenty-five years ago very few U.S. scientists thought so. Indeed, few thought weak EM energy could cause biological effects of *any* kind, hazardous or not. In the mid-1960s, the reigning biophysical dogma was that if EM radiation could not heat tissue, it was biologically innocuous (only very high energy levels could heat tissue). Though reports from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union indicated that both non-thermal microwaves and electrical fields of power lines and substations could alter biology in a variety of ways, most American researchers and the funders who supported them (the military, the Department of Energy, and the power industry) did not credit these reports. The few Americans whose findings suggested a hazard were derided, their studies were attacked, suppressed, or ignored, and sometimes they were shut off from further funding. The isolation of these researchers did not end when, in the 1960s, the American military discovered that the Soviet microwave exposure limit was one thousand times stricter than the recommended American standard.

But in the past ten years the old dogma has dissolved in a flood of lab studies and epidemiological reports. Virtually no biological researcher familiar with the literature now asserts that non-thermal EM energy is ineffectual, and some are convinced that, under conditions of chronic exposure, it is hazardous at very weak levels.

Researchers who have worked in this area for many years, such as ophthalmologist Dr. Milton Zaret, biologist Allen Frey, orthopedist Dr. Robert Becker, biophysicist Andrew Marino, physicist Abraham Liboff, and brain researcher Dr. Ross Adey, say that EM radiation is indeed hazardous, admit they are cautious in exposing themselves, and warn that a very difficult problem lies ahead in limiting the exposure of the general public, workers, and military personnel.

Moreover, several scientists who were originally skeptical, such as Johns Hopkins epidemiologist Genevieve Matanoski and former Battelle Labs researcher Richard Phillips, have been surprised into belief by their own research findings. Matanoski unexpectedly turned up cancer correlations in humans, and Phillips' team found growth, behavioral, and hormonal effects in animals - in each case from exposure to very weak 60 Hz (cycles/second) magnetic and electric fields. Epidemiologist Samuel Milham of Washington, who once thought weak EM field bioeffects were "voodoo," has reported several correlations between cancer and exposure to 60 Hz and radiofrequency fields.

Electromagnetic fields are regions of energetic force that arise from the existence and motion of atomic charges. Non-ionizing EM

fields include all frequencies below that of nuclear radiation and X-rays, and they are called non-ionizing because they cannot alter the structure and charge of atoms.

Any conductor that carries current produces non-ionizing EM fields. Transmission and distribution lines, home and office and industrial wiring, and all the technologies powered by electricity in the home and workplace produce both electric and magnetic fields of 60 Hz (motors and resistive heating can produce especially large fields). AM transmitting towers, TV sets, and video monitors emit EM fields in the 20,000 to 100,000 hertz range. FM and TV transmission, radar, and microwave transmitters, heaters, sealers, and ovens produce energy in the million-to-billion hertz range.

Many technologies, moreover, produce mixtures of frequencies - including medical devices such as electro-surgical units, magnetic resonance imagers, video monitors, and diathermy units.

Except for visible light and high

intensity radio waves, the only radiation told Congress in 1990 that public concern about EM fields shapes his agency's technical approach to all new transmission projects. Private utilities throughout the country, now being called to residences and offices to measure magnetic field levels, are beginning to explore ways to reduce these levels.

The technological and legal dilemma posed by today's growing scientific consensus was forecast in 1968 in testimony before Congress by Charles Susskind, professor of electrical engineering at Berkeley, and one of the first American scientists to see deleterious biological effects in the lab. "Although ionizing radiation seems to loom larger as a hazard," he said, "it would not surprise me in the least if non-ionizing radiation were ultimately to prove a bigger and more vexing problem."

The 1968 hearing at which Susskind testified included attention to microwaves as well as ionizing radiation. This was mainly because of concerns about extremely-high-frequency EM radiation emitted by

After considerable controversy including efforts by the White House to delay the report's release (and during which the word "possible" has replaced "probable"), this report is being rewritten after review by outside scientists and will soon be released in final form.

The EPA Office of Radiation Protection is currently negotiating a plan for a \$20-25 million national research program aimed at answering the many difficult questions that are still unanswered, and its Health Effects Research division is finishing a report that recommends specific directions for further research.

In May of 1991, three divisions of the National Institutes of Health issued a joint request for proposals on research - the first NIH initiative on the issue. A National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) workshop recently recommended increased research on EM fields and breast cancer (in both men and women). The National Cancer Institute is pursuing research on childhood cancer, and a spokes-

mental effects in animals, and many clusters of abnormal pregnancy outcomes have been reported by women working at video display terminals (VDTs); correlation between heart disease and proximity to power lines was reported in 1988; and in 1962 intermittent exposure to microwaves was reported to have induced abnormal capillary fragility (a pre-condition for purpura) in 115 industrial workers in the 1950s and '60s.

The evolution of the EM hazard issue has been marked by peaks and troughs of concern since the 1950s. Early on, reports of radar injuries to military service personnel showed that acute exposure to intense microwaves could cause severe damage through tissue-heating. But it was not until the late 1960s, when technicians discovered that the Soviets were irradiating the U.S. Embassy in Moscow with very weak microwave signals, that concern arose about non-thermal effects. Suspicion that the "Moscow signal" might be an anti-personnel weapon led to a series of animal studies under a Defense Department program called Project Pandora, and to analyses of chromosomes in blood samples from embassy personnel. These evaluations, done in secrecy and embroiled in controversy, fueled the speculation that weak microwaves were biological hazards. This concern became pronounced when rumors arose that the doctor examining the embassy blood samples was finding significant numbers of chromosome abnormalities, and then, later, when it was reported that the former ambassador, Walter Stoessel, had leukemia.

Following the long-drawn-out "Moscow signal" controversy, a second event began to focus attention on extremely-low-frequency (ELF) electric and magnetic fields. The Navy, wanting to build a vast land-based antenna in Wisconsin (operating at 45 and 75 Hz) for communicating with submerged nuclear-weapon submarines, was obliged by the new National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 to undertake biological studies on animals to determine whether the extremely weak fields from the antenna would cause harm to humans. Surprisingly, about fifteen of these studies showed deleterious effects in a variety of species, including cell division delay in slime mold, disorientation of birds, behavioral effects in primates, and increased triglyceride levels in humans.

The Navy studies were reviewed in 1973 by an outside group of scientists, one of whom was Dr. Robert O. Becker, then chief of orthopedic surgery at the Syracuse, New York, VA Hospital. Becker, who since 1958 had been investigating the electrical basis of healing, growth, and regeneration, saw the studies as support for his own therapeutic work, but more than that, as evidence for a potential health hazard from power lines. In 1974, he and his colleague, biophysicist Andrew Marino, were invited to testify in a state hearing on the health and safety aspects of a 765,000-volt transmission line. In the longest regulatory hearing ever

see *Electromagnetic*, p. 15



Illustration: Benn T.F. Nadelman

intensities of microwaves that can heat tissue or cause certain anomalous hearing effects, EM fields are imperceptible. Almost everyone is exposed to them. How many are exposed to hazardous levels, and under what conditions such levels produce disease, are among the key questions that must be answered.

After many years of stonewalling, the utility industry now admits there is a problem. The clearest evidence of concern came in 1987, when the industry convened the first North American utility conference on EM bioeffects; featured as a main speaker was biophysicist Andrew Marino, long the industry's severest critic (he says the industry has not only denied the problem but buried studies that had found effects and even set up rigged studies). Also at this conference Richard Phillips, who had originally been funded by DoE and the power industry and was an early adversary of Marino, admitted he would not buy a house near a high-voltage power line (later clarifying that his concern was not only about land value but about EM field exposure).

Though exposed individuals cannot elicit public admissions from power companies that EM fields are hazardous (for obvious legal reasons), the industry as a whole is clearly very worried, calling the matter a "jugular" issue. Jack Lee of the Bonneville Power Administra-

tion told Congress in 1990 that public concern about EM fields shapes his agency's technical approach to all new transmission projects. Private utilities throughout the country, now being called to residences and offices to measure magnetic field levels, are beginning to explore ways to reduce these levels.

Indeed, the evolution of the issue is marked by a steady series of revelations that lower and lower energy levels can cause effects. Since the concern about radars in the 1950s and '60s, and then about the intense fields of high-voltage transmission lines in the 1970s, increasingly refined experimentation has scientists wondering whether levels of EM energy approaching the ambient (background) may be hazardous. The problem may be far more vexing than Susskind guessed.

Increased activity in the federal government reflects this change in scientific thinking. Congress has held four hearings on EM fields since 1987 and is now attempting to legislate more money for research and public education. Its Office of Technology Assessment, in 1989, issued a report acknowledging the many reports of effects, and cautioning "prudent avoidance" of EM fields.

In 1990, the Environmental Protection Agency released a draft analysis of the literature on cancer and EM field exposure, which provisionally concluded that EM fields are a "probable" human carcinogen.

man recently told *Microwave News* that its earlier view that there is no connection between EM fields and cancer may have been incorrect.

In all this activity the message is clear that involuntary exposure of residents, workers, and military personnel to EM fields is a problem of serious dimensions.

How serious is yet unclear, but as public awareness grows, an increasing number of citizens around the country are reporting health problems from living near sources of EM fields. At an EPA meeting in late July of 1991, Mark Bonar of Shadyside, Ohio, and Dr. Martha Gelderman of Union, West Virginia, reported the following health problems among people living near high-voltage power lines in their communities: in Shadyside, three cases of brain tumors, two cases of epilepsy, three cases of Henoch-Schonlein purpura, two miscarriages, a disabling birth defect, and an instance of electrical malfunction of the heart; in Union, five cases of brain tumors among young people in the past two years.

Scientists in England have reported clinical evidence of grand mal seizures, and lab studies have shown epilepsy-related effects in animals; at least six epidemiological studies have correlated exposure of workers with increased risk of brain tumors; lab studies have reported various reproductive and develop-

Pumping Up With Testosterone

Robin Fisher Cisne

MUSCLE:
Confessions of an
Unlikely Bodybuilder
Samuel Wilson Fussell
Poseidon Press, 252 pp.,
\$9.00 paper

For many men, an illustrious father is a terrible burden: the creation of an authentic identity is doubly difficult, and the construction of a life that is individual, yet comparable, can seem impossible. Harold Bloom, the Yale critic, theorizes this as the essential predicament of all writers - whom he perceives as sons struggling against the memories of prominent fathers - and calls it "the Anxiety of Influence." Sam Fussell's response to his father, and to his anxiety, was as original and potent as his situation demanded: he became a full-time bodybuilder, and, for a time, utterly transformed himself.

Both Fussell's parents are university professors; his father, Paul Fussell, is a noted scholar of 18th century English literature, and a mordant contemporary social critic as well. Outside of his essays for *Harper's* and other magazines, the elder Fussell's best-known, and perhaps his finest, works are his excellent cultural histories of the two World Wars. *Muscle* was written in their considerable shadow, and, while it may lack some structural and stylistic elegance (and why not? it's a first book) the work ably describes the monomania of bodybuilding - the thrill of size and power - and its appalling cost. As

Sam Fussell understood it, bodybuilding was nothing less than a complete reinvention of the self; and although *Muscle* clearly depicts the desperation behind that endeavor, Fussell dissimulates a bit in ascribing its origin.

He writes that the immediate cause of his flight into weightlifting was a real terror of living and working in New York. At length, he describes feelings of sickening vulnerability to the lunatic violence of street and subway, unfavorably compares the dangers to combat in World War II (his father's pivotal experience), and then, in a final, understated paragraph, mentions the loss and isolation stemming from the recent breakup of his parents' marriage. So he decides to grow himself a "carapace", "big, loud muscles" to act as armor to forestall not only attacks by street crazies, but all human contact. As he admits later in the book, this armor kept terrors contained, both within and without. Perhaps his parents' divorce presented Fussell with the daunting prospect of an unmediated relationship with his father. In the book's most poignant scene, the Oxford-educated Fussell has turned himself into a mesomorphic, cellar-dwelling troll, yet his heartbroken mother still wishes to shield her ex-husband from the grotesque failure her son has become.

Throughout the book, amid detailed explanations of weightlifting regimens and colorful descriptions of "gym rats," the subtext of

the father and son recurs. Contrast moment when he manages to confront both issues in one master proving father with the passionate stroke:

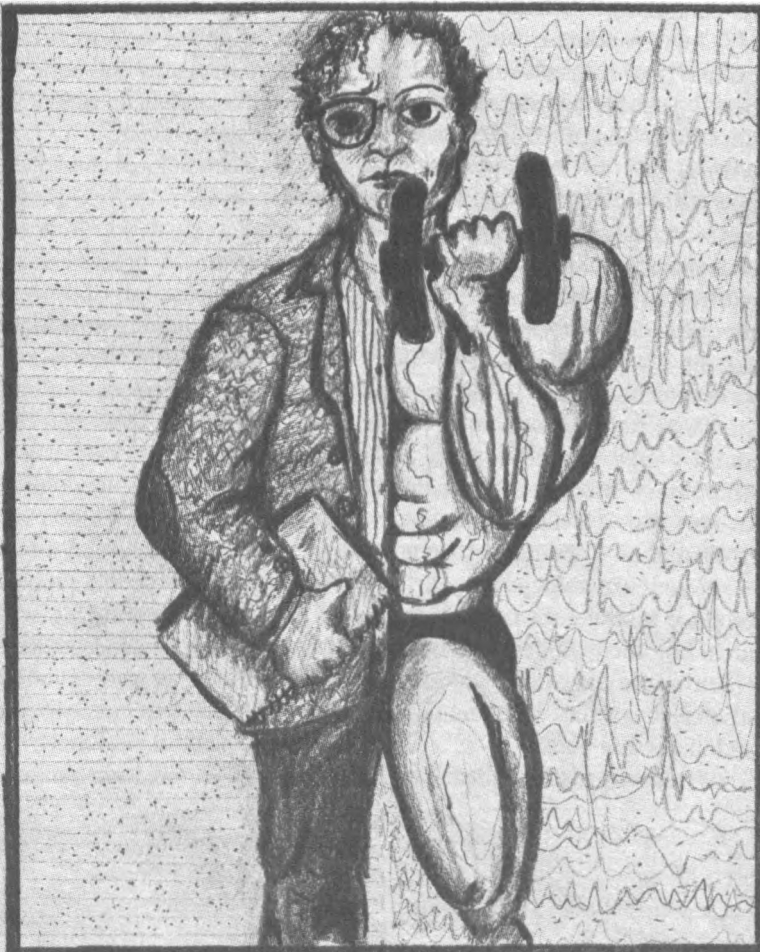


Illustration: Michel Droge

Macon and Lamar, a symbiotic bodybuilding team that reenacts Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac by the administering of steroid injections. Although Sam exults in the new self he is creating, he remains uneasy with his father, until the supreme

From the other side of the table, Bamm Bamm fired his salvo, "My dad's in the tool and die business, what about yours?"

In good bodybuilding tradition, I paused and thought before giving an appropriate response. I couldn't

very well pipe up and say, "Oh, he's a literary and cultural critic, perhaps you're familiar with his latest - it's just out in paper you know, *The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism*?" No, that wouldn't do. I had to find something stronger, something nobler.

"He's dead," I said.
"Was he a lifter?" Nimrod asked suspiciously, pausing with his fork at his mouth.

I was in over my head, but I couldn't stop now. "He certainly was," I lied. "His name was Tug. He was so massive, they buried him in a piano case and lowered the casket into the grave by crane." I assuaged my guilt by reminding myself that a bodybuilder's fundamental task is reinvention.

Despite the obsession with re-making a male body and adopting a hypermasculine persona, identity for Fussell is derived from the posture he selects, and from the experience he creates to support that pose. That identity might also be grounded in the fluctuating and corporeal meanings of gender doesn't occur to him. The implications of his theory "that bodybuilding, decorating the body to such an extreme, [is] principally a feminine exercise" remain unexamined, although he is alternately sympathetic, fascinated and horrified by the lone woman bodybuilder in the book. Unlike her male counterparts whose names are those of mythological or cartoon

see *Muscle*, p. 16

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Electromagnetic Fields

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held in New York, and the first such public evaluation of the issue in the West, the two men presented about 60 studies, including the Navy studies, reports from the Soviet Union, and previously secret industry and government research, which together showed that electric and magnetic fields could have adverse biological effects. In 1978 the New York Public Service Commission judged the line a possible health risk and mandated a five-year series of lab and epidemiological studies aimed at further clarifying the hazard.

The new studies were conducted under the rubric of the New York Powerlines Project (NYPP). Dr. David Carpenter, previously with the Armed Forces Radiobiology Institute, was named executive director. In a 1980 interview Carpenter suggested that past research that had turned up bioeffects (including, presumably, that of Frey, Becker, Marino, Adey, Zarat, and others) had been more or less worthless; he seemed to anticipate that the NYPP studies would find nothing worrisome.

But by 1986 one NYPP study had confirmed a 1979 finding of increased leukemia risk in children living near high-distribution lines,

another had found dyslexia-like learning disabilities in rodents, and another had found increased human cancer cell growth *in vitro*. Soon afterward, Carpenter said publicly that "it is just wrong to imply that there is no hazard," and, since then, he has severely criticized the federal government's inaction on the issue. It was soon after the NYPP findings that the utility industry convened the conference on EM fields.

During the early 1980s other ominous reports began to appear involving women working at computer terminals (VDTs). By mid-decade, about ten clusters of adverse pregnancy outcomes (miscarriage and birth defects) had been reported. Then, in 1988, a California study by the Kaiser Permanente health group (originally undertaken to evaluate the reproductive impact of malthion) reported a correlation between adverse pregnancy outcome and working twenty or more hours a week at VDTs.

Meanwhile independent laboratory and epidemiological (and a few clinical) studies continued to go forward. Between 1980 and 1991, studies in the U.S. and other countries reported the following effects associated with EM field exposure: increased mortality in animals; correlations with depression and sui-

cide; disruptive effects on the pineal gland; occurrence of polycythemia; increased risk of various types of cancer (leukemia, brain tumors, breast cancer, eye cancer); effects on RNA transcription and DNA synthesis; suppression of immune responses; heart disease; fetal loss and birth defects; developmental defects in utero; impaired timing behavior; effects on neurotransmitters; occurrence of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis; allergic reactions including grand mal seizures; and synergy with chemical carcinogens and certain drugs. A few studies, moreover, reported effects across generations (on unexposed offspring), suggesting possible mutagenic impacts.

Thus, by the end of the decade, the view proposed fifteen years earlier by Becker and Marino in the New York hearing seemed well-confirmed: that EM field exposure has no signature disease but, rather, can provoke a wide variety of disease states. The EPA's current research priorities recommend attention not only to cancer but to growth and reproductive effects, nervous system (including behavioral) effects, and immune system effects. The NIH's May 1991 call for research proposals specifies similar areas for study.

The worldwide research work of the past decade, numbering now over 8,000 studies, has led to a growing consensus on the following points:

(1) Magnetic fields, which penetrate practically everything, are a more difficult problem than electric fields, which penetrate less deeply into the body and can be shielded with relative ease; magnetic fields may also be more biologically harmful in themselves. (Not that electric fields are not hazardous; the Soviets, for example, set regulations protecting utility workers on the basis of concerns about electric fields.)

(2) The Earth's natural magnetic field somehow mediates the biological effects of artificial fields. This is of tremendous importance for many reasons, including ongoing attempts to determine the biophysical mechanisms of interaction, as well as the more immediate question of how to correct the technology. This discovery also has ramifications for the study of evolution.

(3) The pineal gland's production of melatonin, which regulates sexual functions and biological cycles, is affected by EM field exposure; this link may provide crucial information about breast and prostate cancer as well as other abnormal conditions.

(4) Extremely weak levels of magnetic fields are capable of altering biological function. The safe limit along New York power line rights-of-way, for example, is presumed to be 200 milligauss (mg), but workers in one important epidemiological study and children in two others were exposed to levels in the 3-4 mg range and showed increased cancer risk.

(5) Numerous species, including humans, have been reported to possess self-synthesized deposits of magnetite, which may be related to nervous system functioning and are clearly involved in providing migration cues. These discoveries are consistent with earlier hypotheses that the earth's natural magnetic field regulates certain functions such as biorhythms, and thus raise the question of the disruption of those functions by artificial fields.

(6) Chronic intermittent exposure may be as serious a problem as chronic continuous exposure; for instance, in offices where electric equipment goes through regular on-off cycles, as in telephone switching facilities, researchers have found excess risk of oral and prostate cancer. Several labs have also reported effects from intermittent exposure.

(7) Microwaves and radiofrequency fields that are modulated or pulsed at extremely low frequencies are in some cases more biologically effective than the microwaves or RF fields alone. This observation is important, particularly in relation to exposure to TV, radio, radar, and other transmissions that encode information by means of pulses on carrier waves, as well as in relation to other technologies that use pulsed fields, including medical technology.

(8) Synergistic interaction occurs between EM radiation and various chemicals, including proven carcinogens, producing more dramatic effects than either factor alone.

Many key questions, however, remain unanswered: The major unknowns are these:

(1) Biophysical mechanisms of

interaction. Hypotheses exist regarding nervous system receptors, action at cell membranes, and "cyclotron resonance" (involving the earth's magnetic field), but none has yet to be proved with finality. Many believe, in fact, that multiple mechanisms exist.

(2) Synergistic effects of mixed frequencies or combined electric and magnetic fields. This gap in knowledge is important to fill because for most people mixed exposure is the reality. Most lab findings have involved exposure to one frequency or one type of field.

(3) Dose-response relationship. This linear model (higher dose, greater effect) that applies to most chemicals does not apply to EM radiation; the consequent unpredictability of effects (apparently because the wrong question is being asked) has given researchers nightmares.

In addition to these uncertainties, it is virtually impossible to characterize the risk in any given situation. The reported effects are too varied, exposure levels are often not known, and individual health variables including age, health, and genetic predisposition further complicate the picture. Probably, the young and those with immune problems are most at risk, but long-term chronic exposure may be hazardous regardless of age or state of health.

Unfortunately for those who are chronically exposed to biologically active levels of EM fields, these gaps in knowledge have provided justifications for inaction.

No enforceable federal standards for human exposure to EM fields presently exist. The recently reviewed EPA report on cancer and EM fields will conclude that a cause-effect relation has not yet been proven, and, thus, that regulatory action is premature.

For a decade and more, citizens' groups have formed to oppose planned communications and transmission projects, some successfully. But for those already exposed and suffering disease, the only recourse is the law court. Perhaps a hundred suits against electronics manufacturers and power companies have been filed since 1980. Many have been settled (often in sealed settlements) out of court, and others are going forward. These include suits by police who allege skin cancer and

see *Electromagnetic*, p. 16

McConkey

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pleasure for me to talk about books. So much so that my first class made me feel guilty. I was talking about books and getting paid for it!"

"I have had students that make you think the world is capable of continuing," he muses. "Of course, that may be an illusion."

He's not joking. Lunch over and the day growing still greyer, McConkey leans back in his chair and folds his arms across his chest. "The world is in a terrible state. That's why I write in the first person," he explains. "When you write in the third person, you define that person against the future. You move forward from the present. But I am not optimistic about the future. When you write in the first person you are using a present moment in time as a focus to look at the past, for bringing together, through memory of what has been, an impulse of synthesis."

We rise from the table and the dogs move toward us with their strangely graceful three-legged gait, tails wagging, pink tongues showing. They position themselves on either side of McConkey with a proprietorial air and he pats their sleek heads.

"We have to overcome our own propensity for violence and aggression," he says. "Every war is an attack on whatever human values we may have. I want no part of it."

And then, as if realizing that the conversation has grown even darker than the day, he relents and offers a smile and a bit of optimism. "But people are basically good. That's why I wrote *Rowan's Progress*, to show the potential and importance of goodness."

We carry our lunch dishes into the kitchen and then McConkey shows me some of the different editions of his works, fetching them from his workroom in a staggering pile. For one brief moment we can

admire them as objects, commenting on the quality of the paper, the design of the covers. But then his handling of them grows lighter, more tentative, and I know that the author has taken over and it is the words on the paper, the purpose under the cover, that draws him and keeps him enthralled and working: the need to keep decoding the world by giving it form and meaning.

McConkey's work distills the small, mundane details of life to create a body of literature that acclaims the human spirit, and our ability to endure. Near the end of *Crossroads* he writes:

...one's voice is simply the instrument of all the truth that has ever been written or felt by individuals since time began... it was the very endurance of memory which makes life at once so terrible and yet so incredibly precious.

My own memory, having relived the past as if it were the present in order to give to an old knowledge the immediacy of revelation, became quiescent. The house with its sleeping occupants, though, had regained the holiness I had felt for it in those years in which I had been a young father, a guardian against the dark...

Outside, the light has stabilized into a gloomy but non-threatening grey that means there will be no snow, no sleet to taunt me as I follow the country road back to Ithaca. Standing at the door, restraining Jerry and Gandy who good-naturedly want to follow me outside, McConkey waits while I start the car. "Drive carefully," McConkey, the caretaker, instructs.

Jeanne Mackin is the author of two recent novels, *"The Frenchwoman"* (1989) and *"Queen's War"* (1991).

Nursing Home

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memoir *Sister Age*, which tells the tales of the old people she has known; *Number Our Days* by Barbara Myerhoff, in which aging Jewish immigrants speak of their passions and disappointments; Florida Scott-Maxwell's candid diary of her own life, *The Measure of My Days*; and Ronald Blythe's eloquent *The View In Winter* are literate and rich experiences. They each give older people a voice and vision of their own, gifts our culture rarely bestows on them. Collectively, they bear out Kierkegaard's insight that while life is lived forward, it is often understood backward.

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Florida Scott-Maxwell. *The Measure of My Days*. New York: Penguin. 150 pp. \$6.95 paper.

Joel Savishinsky is Professor of Anthropology at Ithaca College. He is the editor of "Deviance: Anthropological Perspectives" (Bergin and Garvey, 1991) and author of "The Trail of the Hair: Life and Stress in an Arctic Community" (Gordon and Breach, 1975), "Dementia Sufferers and Their Carers in a London Borough" (PNL Press, 1990), and "The Ends of Time: Life and Work in a Nursing Home" (Bergin and Garvey, 1991).

Electromagnetic Fields

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other problems from exposure to radar units, and by landowners who are attempting to recover damages from utility companies or communications firms, either for health impacts or devaluation of their land. Last year ten law firms from around the country, led by a firm in Seattle, announced the formation of an EM radiation case evaluation team which will cooperate in the development of damage cases.

Citizens are organizing nationally, as well. A recent conference in Fresno, CA, brought together citizen activists (many living in high exposure conditions) from nearly twenty states to discuss future political strategy.

In the face of federal inaction, some states and localities have moved to issue their own regulations. Massachusetts and Portland, Oregon, for example, have established radiofrequency and microwave transmission exposure standards, several states have set magnetic field limits at the edges of power line rights-of-way, and even some small towns have imposed moratoria on construction of new power lines.

Given the continued likely absence of federal EM field exposure regulation, how should individual states proceed to deal with the problem?

An example is testimony I recently submitted to the New York State Assembly committees on Health and Environmental Conservation, making the following recommendations for state action:

(1) that a program of public education be developed which addresses both residential and workplace exposure, so that citizens will know they may be exposed to a health hazard;

(2) that private utilities and the New York Power Authority be required to prove to the PSC in each application for a new power line or substation that citizens will not be exposed to increased levels of EM fields;

(3) that New York agencies establish regulations requiring manufacturers who sell in the state to produce electronic and electrical equipment and devices that emit reduced EM fields;

(4) that power supply planning in New York focus on conservation of electricity as one way of diminishing EM field levels in the general environment;

(5) that private utilities and the Power Authority be forbidden to make public statements, either through bill inserts, press releases, or interviews in the media, that would lead the public to believe that there is insufficient evidence to determine whether EM fields are a health risk.

In addition, approval of radars, microwave transmitters, AM and FM radio and TV transmitters, cellular phone transmission systems, and other higher frequency transmitters should be subject to proof that citizens will not be exposed to increased levels of EM fields.

Some of these issues are preliminarily addressed in NYS As-

sembly bill A.4657, introduced last year by Maurice Hinchey, Chairman of the Environmental Conservation Committee. The bill covers power lines, substations, radar, and electronics manufacturers, proposes loose interim exposure standards that would be revised after a full review of the literature, and imposes a very small civil penalty for violations. The bill has several Assembly sponsors, but none in the Senate.

Further Reading on EM Fields:

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Robert O. Becker and Gary Selden, *The Body Electric* (Morrow, 1985)

Robert O. Becker, *Cross Currents* (Tarcher, 1990)

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Andrew Marino and Joel Ray, *The Electric Wilderness* (San Francisco Press, 1986)

Andrew A. Marino, ed., *Modern Bioelectricity* (Marcel Dekker, 1988)

Cyril W. Smith and Simon Best, *Electromagnetic Man* (St. Martin's, 1989)

Nicholas H. Steneck, *The Microwave Debate* (MIT, 1984)

Joel Ray is a writer and editor living in Ithaca, N.Y.

Muscle

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characters, her nickname refers to a speculative but highly gynecological phenomenon. Even when this formerly shy and diminutive woman boasts that, through bodybuilding, "I've fuckin' reversed the course of nature," Fussell's revulsion at her gender-blending keeps him from asking why mastering nature might be important to either of them.

The climax of Fussell's bodybuilding career occurs in the terrible ordeal of preparing for competition. Starved, nearly swooning, in pain and coated with orange dye, when Sam poses onstage he is the illusion of robust health; when he flexes, a brother lifter crows that he looks "like a human fucking penis." Yet even the bodybuilder's hollow identity, excruciatingly contrived against his father's academic example, is not his to control. When asked for his competition name Fussell hesitates, on the verge of marrying his literary past and musclebound present in "Golem" or "Grendel;" but a roommate spoils the chance with the grandiose and meaningless name, "Rocky Mountain Way."

Muscle can be grouped with other autobiographical writing about cults; the structure of the gym and its rituals, the use and abuse of language are similar to any closed system that serves to keep an initiate insulated from thought and feeling. But there is more. In ending his book, Fussell recalls a New York street scene that frightened him, brawn and all: a fight between father and son, with the son shoving, and the father begging Fussell to hit him, yelling after the younger man that his birth was a mistake. Not even a carapace of muscle is protection from the memory of this, and Sam gives up pumping iron and starts writing about it instead. His father welcomes the prodigal back to the fold with a telegram: "All is forgiven... literature is bigger than people."

Sam Fussell writes of bodybuilding, "As long as we created for ourselves a rite of passage, we could instill our lives with meaning." Paul Fussell has written of his ordeal under fire during World War II and how that experience has shaped his life; his son has had the harder job of inventing, by trial and error, an experience that might do the same for him.

Coleman

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tian or Canaanite scripts or languages were used in the Aegean in the Bronze Age or that Egyptian or Canaanite gods were worshipped there. Bernal's claims that the Greek gods were really Egyptian rests on etymologies that are far from secure. The available Bronze Age evidence, rather than supporting Bernal's thesis, is strongly opposed to it.

(To be continued in next issue)

Bernal

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that we should look more widely? The answer is simply that Coleman's oddly restricted approach is the conventional wisdom, which, in turn - I argue - is the result of externalist influences on the historiography of the ancient Mediterranean. To conclude this section: as Coleman admits the archaeological and onomastic evidence of contacts, and he can hardly deny the linguistic evidence (at least from Semitic), I simply cannot understand how he can claim that "the available Bronze Age evidence, rather than supporting Bernal's thesis is strongly opposed to it."

(To be continued in next issue)

Maus II

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sometimes food and eventually manage even furtive meetings, until they are caught and Vladek is beaten.

The months before liberation are a delirium of brutalities and miracles. As millions die in orgies of murder and plagues of illness, Vladek and Anja miraculously come through. One sometimes thinks that all survivors' tales are miracle books, since nothing short of unnatural laws seem to account for the accidents by which a few lives are spared. To mention just one of many, during one selection of workers for the gas chambers, Vladek hides in the toilet and miraculously is neither discovered nor even missed.

Even the liberation is a miracle story. As the Red Army closes in on Auschwitz, the Germans empty the camps and march the inmates through bitter weather to Gross-Rosen in Breslau Germany, killing many along the way. From there, the inmates are shipped to Dachau on railway cars in which many die. Indeed, some cars are shunted onto sidings and never again opened. At Dachau, many of those who are not killed outright succumb to typhus, and Vladek himself is infected, only to recover enough to be put on a Red Cross train to Switzerland, where some inmates are to be exchanged for German prisoners. Even then, the war over, the Nazi Army beaten and discouraged, roving bands of Nazis continue to round up camp survivors near the Swiss-German border and carry out random assassinations.

Vladek is finally hidden in a

barn until the Yanks come and give him employment as a gofer, shining shoes and making beds. So, yes, *Maus II* is rightly to be thought a miracle book, testimony from a far planet on which death is the norm and survival an apparent suspension of the laws of nature. Art Spiegelman's own existence may be the greatest miracle of them all. What were the odds against his having ever been born?

Together, *Maus I* and *II* constitute as textured and resonant a book as this illustrated medium could produce. Before Spiegelman, who would have predicted a cartoon that successfully bears witness? It aims to go deep and achieves moments of illumination that are worthy of great literature. In the last two panels, Spiegelman pulls off, in simple pictures and the simplest possible dialogue, a coup of the imagination that delivers a blow to the heart. As Art sits at the foot of his father's bed - it is the deathbed - tape recorder in hand, the old man pleads, "So... let's stop please your tape recorder... I'm tired of talking, Richieu, and it's enough stories for now..." His last words to the living son, Art, are addressed to the dead son Richieu, the son he never abandoned in his heart, the son to whom, we now understand, he has been speaking all along. And suddenly we are plunged into depths that few books can take us and deeper, really, than most of us care to find ourselves.

Mark Shechner is a writer living in Buffalo, N.Y.

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